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The Power of the Brush

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EPISTOLARY PRACTICES
IN CHOSŎN KOREA

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Hwisang Cho

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KOREAN STUDIES OF THE HENRY M. JACKSON
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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THE POWER OF THE BRUSH

Epistolary Practices in Chosŏn Korea

HWISANG CHO

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For Miyoung

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Note on Romanized Terms

Romanization of Korean follows the McCune-Reischauer system; pinyin is used for standard Chinese (Mandarin); and Hepburn is used for Japanese. Pronunciations are Korean unless labeled as Chinese (Ch) or Japanese (J). Following standard practice for East Asian names, the surname is placed before the given name, and the two are not separated by a comma.

THE POWER OF THE BRUSH

Prologue

A Story of Letter Writing in Twenty-First-Century Korea

ON August 1, 2001, Ko Towŏn [Go Dowon], a former journalist and speechwriter for President Kim Dae-jung (in office 1998–2003), initiated an experimental daily e-mail service, which he named “morning letters” (*ach'im p'yŏnji*). These morning letters consisted of short extracts from the books that Ko had read and thought impressive, along with his brief reflections on them. Subscribers could read most of these letters, which look like hastily combined aphorisms, within a couple of minutes. Calling his e-mails “vitamins for the mind,” Ko claimed that “a great phrase can make the whole day happy, and can sometimes even change a person’s destiny.”¹ The morning letters proved to be an immediate success, and subscriptions increased rapidly, swelling to 3.84 million (about 8 percent of the South Korean population) by 2018 and still growing. Compilations of these letters have been published in three volumes.² With the remarkable growth in the pool of subscribers, Ko added more features to the morning letter service, such as two-minute speeches that had been created in meditation camps (where subscribers were recruited to give speeches that would be posted online), which he named the Lincoln School; traveling programs for mental healing and inner peace; and an online shopping mall for organic products and books recommended by Ko. Subscribers can also read the e-mails through a smartphone app and Facebook.

Just as gift-giving operates on the assumption of reciprocation,³ epistolary transactions for communication generally demand mutual exchanges

through replies. In this respect, delayed response or failure to respond could be considered disrespectful.⁴ The subscribers to Ko's service, however, do not appear to expect to correspond with him. The morning letters are a one-way transmission of information. The letter writing in this context does not conform to the generic notion of epistolary communication that replaces face-to-face conversations between the sender and the addressee. Instead, it is intended to encourage the recipients to perform acts of meditative self-reflection in everyday life. The sender delivers the messages to various recipients; however, it is each addressee's choice to ruminate on and personally respond to the values of the messages; there is no obligation to report back to the sender. Letters in this context broadcast Ko's vision of self-cultivation rather than facilitating reciprocal communication. This example shows that writing, reading, and using letters can be extended beyond the bilateral communication between sender and addressee. In spite of the very specific notions that people might have about letters, their actual functions are neither preset nor immutable but are cocreated with diverse practices in which both writers and readers appropriate them for various projects at their discretion. The flexibility and adaptability characterizing epistolary practices, combined with the versatility and resourcefulness of their users, invigorate as well as complicate human interactions and social life.

In the history of media innovations, however, convergence between bilateral conversation and broadcasting of information is unusual. With its integration of these two seemingly incompatible communicative operations, the Internet has the ability to change many aspects of human behavior. Previously, innovations of new media forms in the modern world have improved only one of these domains. For instance, the invention of the telegram and telephone enhanced bilateral conversation with minimal contribution to the broadcasting of information. Conversely, the invention of newspapers, radio, and television did not generate crucial changes in conversation but dramatically altered the pattern of broadcasting.⁵ The way that discrete attributes of different media forms influence how their users record, circulate, archive, and retrieve information has been called the "bias of communication."⁶ The adaptability of epistolary practices, which encompass individual and group communications as well as wide dissemination of information, defies this binary analytical frame in media studies.

The usage of letters for disparate purposes also influences their content. In particular, usage may change the relation between epistles and writings in other genres. Ko handpicks phrases and axioms from books that he reads

and combines them in the form of morning letters. Although he adds comments, the main contents of each letter are derived from other works in different genres: poetry, essays, novels, academic works on social sciences or history, and self-help guides. At a glance, Ko's basic principle of composing these letters is similar to that underlying the composition of the sorts of commonplace books, which aided men of letters in early modern Europe in managing various kinds of information.⁷ Just as European literati compiled what they thought useful, Ko Towön gathers quotations to pass along. In fact, this method of extracting phrases from multiple sources was not uncommon historically in drafting letters. Women letter writers in eighteenth-century France were encouraged to fill their letters with quotations from books written by male intellectuals in order to demonstrate their cultural cultivation.⁸ The promiscuity of letters that cut across virtually every kind of information and narrative style does not allow us to easily outline their function and define them as a single genre.

The fluidity of epistles as multiple genres makes them adaptable to diverse media interfaces. Morning letters, which the subscribers receive in their e-mail inboxes, are also available by visiting the morning letter Facebook page (<https://ko-kr.facebook.com/godowon/>) or connecting to the smartphone app designed for this service. To access the letters, readers can use either passive or active methods, at their convenience. It is also notable that Ko Towön published the compilations of morning letters as books. The crossover of the same letters among multiple media forms expands the possible reading modes, which can diversify readership as well as multiply the meanings and social functions of the content. Moreover, these letters, taking physical forms different from their original shape, could easily hybridize with other genres manifested in those material conditions.

The diverse media forms available for the morning letters are geared to the lifestyles of the people who read them. The subscribers must have initially signed up for this service in the expectation of receiving e-mails every morning that would encourage them to engage in self-examination and reflection on their life. In spite of this shared motivation, subscribers may open and read the letters at different moments of the day, and the length of time spent on them may vary from person to person. Some letters might deeply touch the souls of readers, others not so much. Some subscribers may make it their daily ritual to delete the morning letters without even opening them, if they do not unsubscribe from the service. Even though the degree and method of receiving the letters might vary, their arrival every morning

punctuates the tempo of the recipients' daily practices. These letters inserted into the rhythm of people's lives modify their behavior patterns even if the recipients do not engage with the messages.

The subscribers whose daily life revolves around the same letters have formed a new community with more than three million members. Although they do not know each other, they share the experiences of getting, reading, and reflecting on identical e-mails every day. The members of this epistolary community are tied to Ko Towŏn, as only he has control over sending e-mails to all subscribers. He maintains about 3.8 million nodes, each connecting him to a member; however, these nodes do not intersect with each other unless they go through Ko. To put it differently, Ko's morning letter service has steered the subscribers into a radial network individually connected to Ko as a guru-like figure rather than into a multidirectional nexus tangled among themselves. The subscribers are free to join the community, but they have no capacity to organize themselves into any meaningful actions for other sociopolitical purposes through their membership. This is a stark difference from what social media theorist Clay Shirky points out as the political potential of Internet users, who generate unpredictable networks by virtue of the effortless connectivity among individuals that technology makes possible.⁹ Although the morning letter service also uses Internet technologies to reach a wide range of people, it only disseminates Ko's messages rather than encouraging the subscribers to spontaneously interact. These technologies and human interactions using them do not automatically spark the activist vigor of the people who join this new network, although some particular sociocultural settings enable certain communicative modes to unleash egalitarian and democratizing potential. The usage of the same communication technologies does not necessarily bring about identical behavioral patterns among users under disparate sociocultural circumstances.

As the mediator of all communication in this epistolary community, Ko is ideally positioned to mobilize the members behind different agendas. In fact, he has taken advantage of the enlarged membership to add offline activities. The offline campaigns for two-minute speeches in meditation camps involve a particularly complicated mobilization scheme. These events, mostly attended by morning letter subscribers, allow them to confirm and embody their membership in the same epistolary community through person-to-person interactions in offline space. Moreover, because the highlights of these events, particularly the video clips of two-minute

speeches, appear on the morning letter website, the community originally formed intangibly in online space nicely dovetails with the physical gatherings of its members, and vice versa. This coordination between the formation of an epistolary community and the actual social mobilization of its members demonstrates that the act of writing and reading letters can bring together individuals who would not form social groups otherwise.

Ko Towön's application of letters for new purposes, however, is not historically unprecedented. Like the impact of the Internet on the social interactions and organizing patterns of individuals in the contemporary world, letter-writing practices affected both interpersonal nexuses and mobilization of the masses in Chosön (1392–1910) Korea. Sixteenth-century Korea underwent remarkable changes in the written communication within elite households, the methods of Confucian scholarship, the social organizations of rural scholars, and their mode of political participation; all these changes converged in the appropriation of letter writing in one way or another. Letter writing had spread widely across society thanks to the invention of an easy-to-learn Korean alphabet in the mid-fifteenth century. After this, many elite women began to write and read, and the correspondence between men and women increased incrementally in elite households, despite the gender hierarchy under Confucian patriarchy. Letter writing became an indispensable daily practice for the Chosön elites. This caused both men and women to share their different perceptions about textuality and cultural norms, which gave rise to a new kind of textual culture. The routinization of letter writing in everyday life also prompted Chosön people to plug epistolary practices into various projects, similar to how Internet users began to use the technology for unexpected purposes.

Only when diverse social actors considered the Internet quotidian and mundane, part of daily life, did something sociopolitically interesting proliferate there. The connections that people had created in online space entailed diverse organizational patterns for new kinds of political initiatives, social activism, and cultural movements. Ko's morning letters, likewise, could be successful only because the majority of the Korean population was already saturated with the Internet. The parallels between Ko's morning letters and sixteenth-century Korean epistolary practices attest to the commonality between letter writing and Internet culture in terms of communicative potential. Just as the morning letters aim at disseminating Ko's perspectives, Chosön letter writers devised diverse social epistolary genres to broadcast their opinions. The subscribers to the morning letter service

read Ko's messages for self-reflection; Chosŏn scholars read the letters written by some prominent masters for Confucian studies and self-cultivation. Moreover, intertextuality with writings in other genres characterizes the letter-writing practices in both cases, and the expanded functions of letters allow them to take diverse media forms and material conditions. Now we read Chosŏn letters in several different material forms: original manuscripts, those mounted on scrolls, those published in codex form both printed and hand-copied, albums in which manuscript letters were pasted, and those photographed into microfilms or microfiches, as well as digitized forms of all the aforementioned material conditions. In both online communities of twenty-first-century South Korea and epistolary networks during the Chosŏn period, letters and letter-writing practices offered their users the versatility and resourcefulness to address and handle diverse issues in the most appropriate communicative and material forms. How can we explain the diversification of Korean epistolary culture in the sixteenth century, rather than earlier or later? And how did it give rise to changes in the definition of textual norms, the mode of knowledge production, the pattern of social interactions, and the method of political mobilization?

This book aims to provide answers to these questions by examining the roles that epistolary practices played in Chosŏn society. Through epistolary practices, people plugged letters, both their own and others', into all sorts of social interactions, which led them to encompass virtually all kinds of writings as part of letters. The adaptability and flexibility of these practices could seamlessly apply to diverse issues with which the Chosŏn social actors were grappling. Universal characteristics of epistles as multiple genres intersected with historical specificities of Chosŏn society, including (1) the changed linguistic environment after the invention of the Korean alphabet; (2) the lengthy and gradual process of Confucianization; and (3) the novel mode of social leadership and political interaction with the state by educated elites in rural areas.

Building upon existing studies that explore mostly the contents of letters, this book examines letters as material objects, considers the uses of letters for communication and other functions, and analyzes performative elements added to Chosŏn epistolary practices. In sum, it takes a broader perspective to show how the resourcefulness of individual letter writers and the adaptability of epistles defined both the physical conditions of letters as material objects and their communicative functions under disparate socio-political circumstances. This epistolary environment reveals how Chosŏn

letter writers expressed and shared their thoughts and emotions, produced and circulated diverse information and opinions, and interpreted and performed them. Those who mastered the written culture developed in the dominant communicative mode governed the academic discourse, gender norms, and the mode of political participation. Korean written culture created room for appropriation and subversion by those who joined epistolary practices, particularly by minority elite groups. Like digital forms of communication today, letter-writing practices during the second half of the Chosŏn dynasty were at the heart of sociocultural changes, as epistolary practices directed other variables to interact in new ways.

Letter Writing in Korean Written Culture

INTERPERSONAL communication was one of the earliest functions of writing across the world, and in the written culture of East Asia, literary Chinese was a standard written language shared among educated elites for about two millennia.¹ The terminology referring to letters in literary Chinese attests that letter-writing practices might be as old as the history of writing itself. Most Chinese terms allude to various material supports that made writing and reading possible: bamboo strips (Ch. *jian*; K. *kan*), wooden panels (Ch. *du*; K. *tok*), wooden tablets (Ch. *zha*; K. *ch'al*), silk (Ch. *su*; K. *so*), brushes (Ch. and K. *han*), and so on.² This evinces that letters had been written on surfaces older than paper, which was invented in China at the turn of the first century CE. Moreover, the Chinese word *shu* (K. *sō*), which means “to write” as a verb and “the act of writing” or “writing” as a noun, was most commonly used to refer to epistles in literary Chinese, just as letters functioned as a synecdoche for writing itself in lexicographical traditions of some European languages.³

Before the invention of the Korean alphabet in the mid-fifteenth century, male elites had dominated written communication with their exclusive literacy in literary Chinese. The remaining writings of Korean elites from the Silla (?–935) period to the dawn of the modern period display wide usage of all the literary Chinese epistolary vocabulary outlined above. In the literary Chinese classical tradition, the earliest inclusion of letters as a separate section (Ch. *shu*) in a collection of writings was in *Selections of Refined Literature* (Ch. *Wenxuan*; K. *Munsŏn*), compiled in the early sixth century. In

China, the *shu* section appeared in the collected works of most scholars from the Tang (618–907) period onward.⁴ The Korean literati, in contrast, had not meticulously preserved, collected, edited, and published their personal letters as a separate section. Unlike the letters of their Chinese counterparts, the personal correspondence of Korean elites did not receive due attention until the mid-sixteenth century. The remaining examples produced earlier were mostly included in the miscellany section (*chapchō*) of their writing collections along with other random documents. Most seem to have been preserved on account of either their political or academic contents or the authors' fame rather than the significance of letters as a genre.

Korean literati had good reason to sharpen their skills in drafting sophisticated letters. The official positions held by the successful male elites required them to be effective letter writers. Their duties included drafting various types of written communication with the king, fellow officials in diverse government offices, and ordinary people. They delivered their political opinions to the king by presenting memorials (*sangso*) or official petitions (*ch'aja*); submitted brief reports (*chōnmun*) to kings, queens, or queen mothers in the cases of both auspicious and inauspicious events in the state; reported local affairs to the king as governors or magistrates in their official missives (*changgye*); asked to retire by submitting the requests of retirement (*chōngsa*); gave orders to inferior offices by sending out various missives such as orders to outposts (*kwanmun*), casual orders (*kamgyōl*), order dispatches (*chōllyōng*), or directive notes (*t'ongyu*); reported back to superior offices through official reports (*ch'ōpchōng*); and drafted various messages among themselves to take care of business in the forms of circulars (*ch'it'ong* or *hoet'ong*). In one way or another, all these official documents that scholar-officials drafted to fulfill their administrative responsibilities took epistolary form, with designated senders and addressees. The drafts of outgoing letters together with received letters thus formed the fundamental decision documents in the Chosŏn polity, which invested letter-writing practices with special political significance.

Korea's position in the Chinese tributary system, moreover, required Confucian literati to draft flawless diplomatic letters and know the standards of epistolary propriety. China occupied the central position in the East Asian Confucian world order, in which Korea accepted a junior status. Characterized by the notion of respect for superiors (*sadae*), the Chosŏn carefully observed the ritual practices of a tributary state. In this politico-ritual setting, even slight breaches in epistolary protocol could develop into

serious diplomatic problems.⁵ For instance, the diplomatic mission to China presented formal diplomatic missives (*p'yo*) and brief diplomatic missives (*chŏn*) to the Chinese emperor; in return, they brought back his instructive writs (*cho*), imperial rescripts (*ch'ik*), or letters of inquiries (*chamun*) to the Chosŏn king. Likewise, the exchange of state letters (*kuksŏ*) played the central role in diplomatic interactions with countries of equal standing with Korea, such as Japan.⁶ Officials with exquisite literary talent bore the responsibility of drafting impeccable letters representing the Chosŏn court in order to prevent unnecessary diplomatic tensions.⁷ The practice of letter writing figured prominently in all sorts of administrative and political communications, from fulfilling day-to-day administrative routines in local offices to serious diplomatic missions representing the state to foreign countries. Therefore, it is no surprise that many terms referring to official documents bear etymologies related to the practice of letter writing, such as *chŏn*, *ch'a*, *ch'ŏp*, and *sŏ*.

The administrative and diplomatic significance of letter writing also affected the evaluation criteria with which the state selected government officials. The *munkwa* exam was the highest level in the civil service examination system; only those candidates who had passed the preliminary exams either as classics licentiate (*saengwŏn*) or literary licentiate (*chinsa*) could take it. This three-step exam tested the candidates' comprehension of Confucian classics, writing skills, and discussion of current events. The second stage, testing writing skills, required the candidates to compose in such diplomatic epistolary genres as formal and brief diplomatic missives, along with some other genres. The mastery of epistolary protocols, in this respect, was as significant in the preparation for the civil service exam as proficiency in the Confucian classics. The thirty-three men who were selected through the *munkwa* every three years would become high-ranking officials in the central government and were expected to be able to compose impeccable epistles.

Formulaic letters also played a significant role in the formal interactions between elite families. For instance, in Confucian family rituals, the exchanges of nuptial letters between the groom's family and the bride's family marked an important step in affirming the tie between them through the upcoming marriage. These letters, written by the patriarchs of the two families, were reported to their respective family shrines in the symbolic gesture of seeking approval from their ancestors.⁸ This ritual function bespeaks the symbolic power of letter writing in the social interactions

among Chosŏn elites as the mechanism making their bonds official.⁹ Epistolary practices figured prominently in fulfilling both the political responsibilities and social rituals of educated elites. Letter writing in literary Chinese was a serious matter.

THE KOREAN ALPHABET AND THE TAMING OF KNOWLEDGE

The invention of the Korean alphabet in 1443 and its promulgation in 1446 brought about crucial changes in how people wrote and read across Chosŏn society. The ease of this new system allowed those who had not been able to express their thoughts and feelings in writing to do so. Social actors from a wide cultural spectrum, including women and nonelites, took up the practices of writing and reading. The exponential increase in the sheer number of epistles circulated in elite society transformed people's perception of letters and what they could do with them. The detractors of its usage, mostly male elites, however, discounted literacy in easy vernacular script as reflecting its users' intellectual and cultural inferiority. They wanted to distinguish themselves from the rest of society with their exclusive access to the classical Chinese literary tradition and warned that the ease of writing in the vernacular could make Confucian scholars avoid devoting themselves to classical learning, while being engrossed in such trivial tasks as writing letters.¹⁰ Contrary to the unchallenged general notion that male elites disparaged and shunned the Korean alphabet, however, literary Chinese and vernacular Korean were at once exclusive and complementary to each other.¹¹ Due to the gap between spoken Korean and literary Chinese as a written language, the elites found the Korean alphabet extremely useful.

Most of all, the linguistic precision of the Korean alphabet helped resolve an age-old problem of expressing pronunciations of spoken Korean and Chinese characters. Ever since Chinese characters were introduced to Korea, expressing the sounds of Korean terms in writing had posed onerous intellectual problems, due to the lack of linguistic connection between spoken Korean and written Chinese. Korean literati had strived to resolve this since as early as the Three Kingdoms period.¹² The compromise was the creation of a system to render Korean words using Chinese characters—*idu*, *kugyŏl*, and *hyangch'al*.¹³ The visual similarities between Chinese words and Chinese renderings of Korean pronunciations, however, often made deciphering texts that included both of them extremely baffling. Whereas some Chinese

characters conveyed meanings with their semantic values, others rendered the Korean pronunciations with their phonetic values or even with phonetic values associated with their meanings in Korean. When readers tried to make sense of the characters only with their semantic values, they easily fell into confusion. Rather than conveying the exact Korean pronunciations, moreover, these Chinese renderings limited them to the range of sounds that the Chinese characters could express.

The absence of phonetic means of writing also posed problems in learning the pronunciations of Chinese characters. The educated male elites habitually composed and exchanged poems in both private and public settings; this was a marker of cultivation for which the understanding of correct Chinese pronunciations was essential. The phonological knowledge comprised the toolkit for matching rhymes as well as complying with metrics and prosody in composing poems in literary Chinese. In this regard, it is worth noting that the organizing principle of the Korean alphabet originated from studies of sounds.¹⁴ King Sejong (r. 1418–1450) ordered the translation of *Mastering Phonology* (Yunhui), the widely used reference for Chinese phonology, in 1444.¹⁵ In 1448, only two years after the promulgation of the Korean alphabet, *The Correct Phonology of the Eastern Country* (Tongguk chŏngun) was published, attempting to standardize the unsettled pronunciations of Chinese characters.¹⁶ This state-led standardization led to the inclusion of the Korean alphabet and Chinese phonologies in the civil service examination in 1460.¹⁷ All these efforts attest that one benefit of the new writing system for educated elites was the enhanced capability to grasp the precise pronunciation of Chinese characters, as suggested by the official name of the Korean alphabet, *Correct Sound to Instruct People* (Hunmin chŏngŭm).

Besides making breakthroughs in phonological studies, the state authority endeavored to translate Confucian classics into vernacular Korean. Throughout the premodern period, the onerous process of mastering literary Chinese ensured the dominance of educated male elites, as literacy constituted precious cultural capital that only a few people could afford. However, this impeded their social duty to disseminate Confucian teachings to transform the people morally (*kyohwa*). With the easy Korean alphabet, they could make some Confucian texts available in Korean translation. Although they continued to use literary Chinese as the official written language for government functions, they attempted to edify the general public with vernacular

Korean texts. This allowed educated male elites to keep their cultural privileges while making egalitarian gestures.

The moral primers were the first works to be translated and published. The court ministers began to discuss the need to translate and disseminate *Elementary Learning* (Sohak) and *The Illustrated Guide to the Three Relationships* (Samgang haengsilto) during the 1470s.¹⁸ The Korean translations of these two titles were published respectively in 1518 and 1481.¹⁹ Although it is difficult to determine how widely they were circulated, literacy in vernacular Korean script could have spread even among provincial *yangban* elites and *yangban* women by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century through this kind of elementary education in Confucian principles.²⁰ However, the translation of major Confucian classics posed more fundamental intellectual problems. With no agreement on how to add *kugyŏl* marks, which would clarify the semantic structures of classical Chinese texts, the translation process demanded extensive deliberations among scholars well versed in classical studies. Moreover, some court ministers objected to adding any kind of grammatical aid to the classical Chinese phrases for the same reason they opposed the usage of the Korean alphabet. They feared that beginning scholars would take shortcuts in the learning process.²¹ For these reasons, the Korean translations of the core Confucian classics, the Four Books, did not come out until the 1590s, and it was only at the beginning of the seventeenth century that translations of the Three Classics—*The Book of Poetry* (Ch. Shijing), *The Book of History* (Ch. Shangshu), and *The Book of Changes* (Ch. Yijing)—were published.²² The state translation initiative lowered the bar to access them, which helped novice scholars jumpstart their learning. With these translations, moreover, the state authority could standardize the meanings of Confucian classics while regulating unorthodox interpretations of them. This reveals how the Chosŏn state defined and standardized the knowledge that could reach people with vernacular Korean literacy.

However, the Chosŏn government most extensively translated Buddhist sutras, which amounted to about 60 percent of all vernacular Korean publications by the court during the second half of the fifteenth century.²³ The Bureau of Printing Buddhist Sutras (Kan'gyŏng Togam), established in 1461, published some ten translated sutras until it was shut down in 1471.²⁴ Given the ruling elites' harsh criticism of Buddhist doctrine as the cause of depravity and debacle in the fallen Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392), the proliferation of Buddhist texts in the early Chosŏn period has puzzled many scholars. Some

have stressed how devout early kings were, such as Sejong and Sejo (r. 1455–1468), which only partly explains this phenomenon. The remnants of Buddhism did not merely persist in the political and religious spheres during the early Chosŏn period. The pervasive influences of Buddhism in Korea for about a millennium comprised history, traditions, and lifestyles that permeated the realms of the subconscious, the bodily and daily practices of both individual social actors and the communities they formed, irrespective of their social status and gender.²⁵ The dynastic change and the subsequent diatribes against Buddhism could not put an end to these embodied religious practices overnight. The majority of the population maintained this way of life, connecting the religious creed and behavioral patterns, despite the ideological downfall of Buddhism in political discourse. If the people were to learn a new writing system and read some stories written in it, the religious content would have been most suitable for their lifestyles. It is thus no surprise that the Chosŏn court was willing to churn out Korean translations of Buddhist sutras if its intention was to widely disseminate the new writing system.

Moreover, the translation of Buddhist texts addressed the same kind of linguistic problems raised in the studies of Confucian classics. The precise pronunciation of mantras (*chinŏn*) held vital significance, as lay Buddhists believed that the vocalization of mantras would invoke the sacred power of Buddha. Unless the mantras were recited correctly, their piety would not generate any propitious benefits. Korean Buddhists, however, found it daunting to reproduce the correct sounds because the mantras introduced to Korea were Chinese transliterations of Sanskrit originals. The process of resuscitating the mantras involved double-layered phonological scrutiny: from Sanskrit to Chinese and then from Chinese to Korean. Just as the Confucian scholars strove to pin down the correct pronunciations of Chinese characters for their classical knowledge and poetry composition, the Buddhists needed to enhance the ways they could express and instruct the correct sounds to guide lay believers to access Buddhist rituals.²⁶ In the Chinese context, the Buddhist penchant for psalmody triggered serious consideration of the sound values of writing systems. The first instances of written vernacular in China appeared exclusively in Buddhist contexts. In the same vein, the invention of the Korean alphabet has even been described as a Buddhist phenomenon.²⁷ Although this argument neglects the versatile applications of the Korean alphabet beyond Buddhist contexts ever since it became available, it gives due attention to the concerns about inscribing the correct

sounds in written forms. Overall, as much as the translation of Buddhist texts into vernacular Korean was ideal for disseminating a new writing system to the general public, the task of transliterating mantras using the Korean alphabet enhanced phonological knowledge and its expression.²⁸

The Chosŏn state also utilized the Korean alphabet to publish texts on practical knowledge. The translation of medical books began in the late fifteenth century and continued to prosper in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁹ Diverse manuals on martial arts and military tactics were translated into Korean after the Japanese invasion in the late sixteenth century and the Manchu invasion in the early seventeenth century.³⁰ However, not every practical subject was translated. For instance, the well-known manual for agricultural techniques *Straightforward Explanation of Agriculture* (Nongsa chiksŏl) was never translated into vernacular Korean. It appears that this particular title was distributed to local magistrates so that they could instruct the local population rather than distributing the books directly to the farmers.³¹ This decision could have been affected by either the literacy rate of farmers or the standards that the Chosŏn government had for information to be circulated. Despite the absence of further evidence, this case shows that the Chosŏn state intended to control the flow of information in society by selecting the types of knowledge to be translated in vernacular Korean. Although the Korean alphabet had the potential to democratize the spread of knowledge and information, the state, seizing the initiative, utilized it to define and tame the knowledge. Thus, vernacular Korean script did not become the official writing system of Korea until 1894, when the currents of modernity in the form of nation-states pushed the Chosŏn state to reform its culture and institutions.³²

LITERARY EXPRESSION OF THE SELF

The state's active role in translating and circulating various texts did not necessarily give it full control over the social application of the Korean alphabet. The availability of a new writing system that was easy to learn and use sparked the creative verve of its users. Of course, this creative propensity also emerged among the newly literate. However, male elites, who had savored various literary genres, were the first group to use the new writing system to expand their expressive capacities. The habitual compositions and exchanges of poems among male elites frequently involved oral performance and aural appreciation of their productions; however, this felt rather distant

and outlandish due to the rupture between the spoken and written languages. The first effort to close this gap with the Korean alphabet was the translation of canonical literary Chinese poems. The poems of Du Fu (712–770), a famous Chinese poet during the Tang dynasty, were translated into Korean in 1481.³³ In the poetic culture of premodern Korea, Du Fu's works were admired as the best examples expressing the pure spirit of ancient times in a sophisticated and sensible style. Circulation in both literary Chinese and vernacular Korean translation perpetuated their popularity and significance throughout the Chosŏn period.³⁴

Now that the Korean alphabet directly inscribed the sounds of spoken Korean into writing, native Korean songs that had been transmitted orally were also documented. The lyrics of songs popular during the late Koryŏ period were put together in *Standard Course in the Studies of Music* (Akhak kwebŏm) published in 1493 by the Chosŏn court. Korean poetic genres such as *sijo* and *kasa*, which had been widely enjoyed from the late Koryŏ period on, gained new momentum with the availability of vernacular Korean script. For instance, T'oebye Yi Hwang (1501–1570) composed twelve *sijo* poems in Korean to celebrate his enjoyment of life in his residence at Tosan (Tosan sibigok). In the postscript to these poems, T'oebye pointed out the differences between expressing emotions in vernacular Korean and classical Chinese. He stated that the contemporary poems were to recite (*yŏng*) but not to sing (*ka*), unlike the songs popular during the Koryŏ period. In order to sing poems, he continued, the poets had to stick to the vernacular words and sounds.³⁵ In this way, T'oebye specifically adduced the ability to directly deliver spoken sounds in written form as something that maximized the poetic sensibility. The popularity of *sijo* poems also facilitated the interplay between vernacular Korean and literary Chinese in a new dimension. Sometimes the Korean *sijo* poems were translated into literary Chinese. *Nine Songs about the High Mountain* (Kosan kugokka), composed by Yulgok Yi I (1536–1584) in 1578, was one such case, in which he commemorated his pleasure in living in Stone Pond (Sŏktam), located in Haeju. Song Siyŏl (1607–1689), a faithful follower of Yulgok's philosophy, translated these poems into literary Chinese.³⁶ In this way, Korean poets traversed and hybridized literary Chinese and vernacular Korean, depending on the cultural milieu they wanted to evoke with different linguistic modes.

Unlike literary Chinese poems written by only very few privileged elite women,³⁷ Korean *sijo* poems were also composed by women of low social status, such as Hwang Chini (d.u.), a famous early Chosŏn entertainer. The

women might have needed poetic skills to serve their male elite patrons by exchanging these song poems. The expression of poetic sensibility in spoken language could have positioned these women on equal standing with their male counterparts.³⁸ As the demand for song poems increased, professional *sijo* singers began to emerge in the eighteenth century. The oral performance of *sijo* poems helped to disseminate them beyond the elite class.³⁹ This poetic form thus gradually trickled down, and nonelite poets adjusted its structure to deliver their thoughts more freely. Consequently, unlike the original structure with three fourteen-to-sixteen-syllable lines, more lengthy and unhindered narrative *sijo* poems (*sasöl sijo*) proliferated during the late Chosŏn period, frequently including critical content animated with vulgar slang and onomatopoeia.⁴⁰

A similar pattern of diffusion happened with the *kasa* genre, which began to spread among male elites from the late Koryŏ period, when *sijo* poems also became popular. Unlike *sijo* poems, however, *kasa* poems have a much looser metrical structure, allowing writers to add to the contents without any restriction on length. This characteristic of *kasa*, which placed it between poetry and prose, must have been inspired by classical Chinese genres like lyric poetry (*ci*) and rhymed prose (*fu*). For this reason, *kasa* made it easier to elaborate on more detailed content than *sijo* poems, while still enabling people to recite them like songs.⁴¹ As in the case of *sijo* poems, women and commoners composed in this genre during the late Chosŏn period. Elite women expressed their mixed feelings about their lives in what are now categorized as *kasa* verses from the inner chambers (*kyubang kasa*). On the one hand, they reiterated the female virtues set by Confucian norms, but they also expressed their grievances about unfair treatment by in-law family members or their loneliness caused by estrangement from their husbands.⁴² When the commoners appropriated this genre, some did not hold back their dissatisfaction about social discrimination and political institutions. Some *kasa* poems functioned as an alternative means to convey political messages among nonelites. By addressing political issues to people with little education in less direct ways than formal political genres, this genre helped Chosŏn subjects constitute a Korean form of the public sphere.⁴³

The spread of vernacular Korean literacy also affected the ways people consumed prose literature. In particular, the wide circulation of novels differentiated the literary scene of the late Chosŏn period from earlier times. *The Tale of Hong Kiltong* (Hong Kiltong chŏn), authored by Hŏ Kyun (1569–1618), is generally considered the first novel written in vernacular Korean⁴⁴

The emergence of vernacular Korean novels did not immediately entail a rise in their readership. Because commercial printing had remained negligible well into the nineteenth century, most novels were circulated in manuscripts hand-copied by many hands. In this situation, people could share very few books by either circulating them in their familial and social networks or reading them aloud to entertain multiple people. Even during the eighteenth century, when book-lending businesses prospered in the Seoul area, most books were hand-copied and were frequently read aloud for illiterate or semilliterate audiences. Professional readers (*chŏn'gisu*) performed various vernacular Korean novels in this context.⁴⁵ Although it is generally believed that elite women were the predominant consumers of these novels, the association between women and vernacular Korean script, which linked them to the genre of the novel, remains arbitrary and uncertain at best. There is no evidence that women were the sole or main readers of novels. The need to dissociate elite men from novels caused women to be assigned to this genre, which was again used to reinforce the gender hierarchy between men and women. With both circulation of hand-copied versions and oral performances, people across society could enjoy vernacular Korean novels in the late Chosŏn period.⁴⁶ Overall, the availability of vernacular Korean script affected how Chosŏn people produced and consumed literary works regardless of their gender, class, and age.

DOCUMENTATION AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

The diffusion of the Korean alphabet and subsequent increase in documents that people produced with this new writing system changed the mode of social interactions. Ordinary subjects took advantage of the easy Korean alphabet to put their grievances into words, particularly through petitions to the relevant government bureaus or even directly to the king. The ability of women and nonelites to voice their grievances in writing and textually process political information instituted a new mode of political communication in Chosŏn society.⁴⁷ The addition of the people's voices to the political discourse not only changed their power relation with the ruling elites but also refashioned how the king and his ministers negotiated and compromised political sway in court debates. Both the kings and the court ministers wanted to use people's voices for their political advantage.⁴⁸ Although the Chosŏn court had mostly forbidden subjects from submitting their petitions or other official documents in vernacular Korean script, to regulate the

excessive inflow of people's raw emotions to the political debates,⁴⁹ rulers relied on the script to reach wider society when the political circumstances required them to do so. In state emergencies, the Chosŏn court found the Korean alphabet useful for either directly communicating with the subjects or widely broadcasting information. It is well known that King Sŏnjo (r. 1567–1608) issued an edict in vernacular Korean to encourage his subjects to fight against the Japanese invaders during the Imjin War (1592–98).⁵⁰ There also remain about thirty royal edicts that accompanied the vernacular Korean translation, most of which were issued during the reign of King Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800).⁵¹

In addition to their legal and political purposes, the extant documents preserved from the Chosŏn period also show that the use of vernacular Korean script facilitated economic transactions. Some elite families produced inheritance documents and wills in vernacular Korean, which required a more sophisticated understanding of the Chosŏn economic structure.⁵² Some remaining evidence confirms that elites exchanged vernacular Korean letters with their servants, to whom they often consigned the management of estates located far from their residence.⁵³ The head slaves often sold or bought lands on behalf of their masters, for which correspondence between them was essential.⁵⁴ These financial transactions frequently involved documents drafted in literary Chinese, which requires us to reconsider how social status factored in literacy in Chosŏn society. Even nonelites with limited education could document such economic transactions as selling and buying lands and houses using the Korean alphabet.⁵⁵ Toward the end of the Chosŏn dynasty, merchants could engage in more complicated credit management by issuing promissory notes, for which extensive bookkeeping in the Korean alphabet was instrumental.⁵⁶ This situation attests to the proliferation of commerce during the late Chosŏn period.

Women also joined this trend of documentation in both public and private settings. Writing skills were indispensable for women in the royal court to fulfill their work duties. Aside from the few who became a king's or prince's consort, women who entered the royal palace as court ladies provided professional services needed for the day-to-day running of the royal residences, sustaining the ritual order of monarchy and maintaining material culture.⁵⁷ Those who belonged to the Royal Secretariat had to be proficient in vernacular Korean script to write letters of greeting on behalf of royal family members, keep royal household registries, and copy books for royal libraries.⁵⁸ Their expertise also allowed them to exercise their agency

in cultural production, as shown in the popularity of their calligraphic style, the palace style (*kungch'è*), created during the nineteenth century.

Women's literary practices outside the royal palace mostly revolved around the domestic settings of elite *yangban* families. Although deeply invested in Confucian patriarchy, elite households relied on the labors and skills of their female members to abide by Confucian ritual norms. Women in elite households, for example, were responsible for preparing both offerings for the ancestral services and meals for ritual attendees. Because prominent lineage groups offered services up to great-great-grandparents, schedules and resources demanded meticulous supervision. Some families tried to streamline this duty by putting the dates of commemorative rites and needed supplies for ritual offerings into lists. Whereas the former appeared in both literary Chinese and vernacular Korean, the latter were mostly written in vernacular Korean.⁵⁹ This attests that both men and women needed to remember the date of the next ancestral service, but the material side of Confucian rituals rested on women's shoulders, and they used their vernacular Korean literacy.

Some elite women also used vernacular Korean documents in their daily duties. For instance, recording the measurements of dress sizes for family members could save time and effort whenever they made new dresses.⁶⁰ Paper sock patterns (*pösŏnbon*), blank pieces of paper in the shape of a sock, also provided writing space on which they put down words of blessing for their loved ones. These sock patterns were hoisted on bamboo masts on the full-moon day of the first month, and it was believed that bad luck would go away when they were blown away. Women's vernacular Korean literacy thus accommodated both their practical and religious practices.⁶¹

The habit of recording and documenting also contributed to the transmission of homemaking knowhow from one generation to another. A cookbook written by Madam Chang of Andong in the late seventeenth century (*Ŭmsik timibang*), for instance, was circulated among women in her family.⁶² In it, Madam Chang asked the daughters to hand-copy and take their own copies with them, while warning them not to displace the original manuscript.⁶³ As shown in the circulation of vernacular Korean novels during the late Chosŏn period, hand-copying and sharing texts among female family members formed a significant cultural bond. Madam Chang and her daughters formed a textual community around this manuscript cookbook, producing, circulating, interpreting, and reproducing the vernacular Korean text. The materiality of these hand-copied books, such as the calligraphic styles or any

traces left by scribes or earlier readers, contributed to the formation of an intra- and intergenerational fellowship of shared emotions.⁶⁴

EPISTOLARY PRACTICES WITH KOREAN CHARACTERISTICS

Something socially exciting began to happen in online space only when the Internet became boring and quotidian due to its wide distribution to most social actors.⁶⁵ Because of this gap between the emergence of new communicative technologies and their social effects, the process in which communicative innovations end up changing the lifestyles of social actors is not orderly but demands a long period of chaos.⁶⁶ One systematic framework with which to comprehend the relationship between innovations in ideas or technologies and their social impacts notes that the diffusion of innovations is a process in which individual actors communicate new ideas or technologies among themselves over time under the given social circumstances. Four factors—(1) the characteristics of the innovation itself, (2) communication channels through which it can be circulated, (3) time needed for the dissemination process, and (4) a social system in which the innovation is communicated—influence the pattern and speed at which it is disseminated.⁶⁷ Moreover, each individual responds to innovations with different degrees of willingness to adopt them.⁶⁸ Overall, no matter how ingenious a certain innovation might be, its dissemination in the society and social actors' adoption of it involve a process of negotiation and compromise with the preexisting social system.⁶⁹ The usual result was a gap between the rise of new ideas or technologies and their impacts on social practices.

How the invention of the Korean alphabet influenced the modes of social interaction and cultural production corroborates these theoretical analyses. Individual social actors' co-optation of vernacular Korean script for literary expression, legal empowerment, and documentation mostly began in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, about a half century after the invention of the Korean alphabet. In spite of its communicative potential, users needed time to fully grasp this new linguistic tool and employ it in various sociocultural practices. This new writing system was at once the innovation itself and the main communication channel through which the innovation was circulated. The Internet also shows this characteristic; however, the transaction costs for the users in these two cases differ radically. Propagation of the Internet requires substantial investment in social and

technological infrastructures for data transmission, such as telephone lines for dial-ups or broadbands for high-speed connections, the creation of enough Internet service providers (ISPs), and the individual users' willingness to spend on devices such as computers. In contrast, the dissemination of vernacular Korean script relied on rather simple and humble material requirements—brushes, ink, and paper. This grassroots dissemination also did not demand massive infrastructural investments, as shown in the publication of Confucian moral primers or Buddhist sutras on the initiative of the Chosŏn state. This relatively low material bar allowed the Korean alphabet to permeate everyday communicative practices, including letter writing, which might seem too mundane and trivial to have a meaningful impact on human life and social structure. By virtue of their effortlessness, functionality, and informality, vernacular Korean letters developed into the most common communicative genre used across the society. When people's daily life was saturated with letter-writing practices as routine, however, diverse unconventional practices emerged, which triggered the rise of new cultural norms, social networks, and political culture.

However, not everyone could afford to take part in this seemingly humble material activity. Letter writing in vernacular Korean, therefore, began to spread among royal family members first,⁷⁰ then gradually trickled down to the elite class and further.⁷¹ This top-down pattern of dissemination could be also partly attributable to the fact that the new writing system was invented as the result of a state initiative. The most remarkable change took place in the networking patterns both within and among the elite households. Unlike literary Chinese letters exchanged exclusively among male members of elite families, vernacular Korean letters were ideal for maintaining networks among kin, including both men and women. Elite women found vernacular Korean letters particularly valuable. They wrote about and shared their emotions with their loved ones who would have remained separated otherwise. They could express their loneliness as well as longing for the natal family members whom they had left upon marriage, husbands who were away for official duties, and daughters who had married out. Women as letter writers could maintain their own networks outside of those required by their positions in the patriarchal structure within their husbands' families. As prolific letter writers, they could have considered correspondence their most important link to the outside world.⁷² Letters allowed them to "cross the forbidden spaces between their husband's house and their natal home and invite their dear ones into their secluded quarters."⁷³ This situation later

alarmed some male Confucians like Song Siyöl so much that they considered letters delivered to elite women as unauthorized visitors to the inner quarters, where no visitors were allowed in the absence of their husbands.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, for the users of vernacular script, letters must have been the most accessible genre that did not threaten the male elites' dominance in the literary Chinese classical tradition. Most women letter writers were not writers of anything else. They did not study Confucian classics or publish their works, which could violate the boundary between the female domestic sphere and the male public sphere.⁷⁵ The epistolary community charged with poignant emotions created a liminal area between these two spheres, which also included male elites. They joined this web of correspondences as fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, and so on. There remain numerous letters sent by male elites to their female family members, which evinces that many male elites cultivated fluency in vernacular Korean writing through their epistolary interactions with women.⁷⁶ Whereas vernacular Korean letters exchanged between men are rare, almost all extant vernacular Korean letters involved elite women as either senders or recipients. In this regard, men and women influenced each other; women were not simply replicating the norms of literary Chinese written culture or devising subversive trends comprehensible only among themselves. While women learned expressive conventions and epistolary etiquette from their male counterparts' letters, men were exposed to astonishingly new and sometimes eccentric textual practices that women writers employed, which must have originated from their lack of formal education and prior exposure to written texts in nonpaper forms.⁷⁷ The proliferation of vernacular Korean letters in elite domestic life functioned as the contact zone between old and new written cultures.

ELUSIVE SECRECY IN CORRESPONDENCE

The absence of an affordable and reliable postal system also partly explicates why the elite class were the widest users of correspondence. The modern postal system was not established in Korea until 1894, and the official relay horses delivered only official documents between government offices during the Chosön dynasty. Individual letter writers had to arrange the delivery of their letters on their own. Affluent elite families generally dispatched their servants as messengers who frequently conveyed oral messages along with the letters. The elites preferred oral messages for the content they thought inappropriate to be recorded in writing.⁷⁸ This combination also shows that

Chosŏn correspondents had clearly recognized the limitations of letters, which could be lost, intercepted, or purloined. However, letter writers with less means could not afford these double communicative arrangements and had to rely on more ad hoc delivery methods. When no servant was involved as messenger, letter writers commonly asked whoever would be traveling to the area of the recipient's residence to deliver letters, which was called *inpyŏn*. There was no other way to have their letters delivered. In many cases, therefore, the availability of messengers decided the timing of correspondence rather than whether or not the letters were ready to be sent. It was normal for people to store several letters until they found messengers.⁷⁹ When the senders could not find travelers directly heading for the destination they wanted, they arranged several messengers as a relay (*chŏnp'yŏn*), which substantially mitigated the chance that the letter would eventually fall into the addressee's hands.⁸⁰ Receiving minimal or no material compensation and undertaking cumbersome detours in their travel, these haphazardly arranged messengers were never fully reliable.

The difficulty in finding messengers prompted the creation of epistolary expressions like *chŭksŏn*, *chŭkchŏn*, and *chŭngnap*, meaning that the recipient wrote the reply in haste to send it via the messengers on their way back.⁸¹ Time constraints could have kept them from elaborating on the issues that they wanted to convey. Writing back hastily also sometimes forced the addressees to do without basic stationery. They sometimes wrote in the blank spaces of the letters that they had received and sent them back to the original senders.⁸²

The demand for reliable messengers led letter writers to hire *chŏnin* or *p'aengin*, people who professionally ran errands for fees during the Chosŏn period.⁸³ Even if senders hired these messengers, it did not guarantee that the contents of letters would be kept confidential. Many anecdotes evince that the *chŏnin* messengers, either deliberately or inadvertently, glimpsed letters that they were delivering or allowed strangers to have access to them. For example, *The Tale of Ch'unhyang* (Ch'unhyang chŏn), a famous p'ansori story set in the late seventeenth century, shows how easily letters could have been intercepted and read by people other than the intended addressees. In this love story between a son of a *yangban* official and a daughter of a former courtesan, Ch'unhyang, the female protagonist, resists the new magistrate's advances while her lover is away in Seoul. The magistrate threatens to execute her for defying the state authority. Just before her death, Ch'unhyang hires a messenger to send her letter to Yi Mongnyong, the male protagonist.

At that moment, Mongnyong is traveling back to town as a secret royal envoy after winning first place in the civil service examination. He runs into the messenger on the road and demands to read Ch'unhyang's letter without exposing his identity. Though the messenger resists a while, Mongnyong succeeds in persuading him by quoting from a poem by Zhang Ji (766–830), a poet of Tang China: "The traveler set out on his way. And then the letter was opened." Mongnyong gets to read Ch'unhyang's letter written in blood and sheds tears while doing so. His tears smear the letter, and the messenger becomes angry after discovering the damage. The messenger asks him to repay fifteen nyang, the cost of letter delivery.⁸⁴ This vivid scene of Mongnyong reading Ch'unhyang's letter and the messenger checking out this letter on the open road shows that the idea of secrecy in correspondence is anachronistic.⁸⁵

The intentions of the addressees, much more than those of the senders, and the life span of letters as material objects determined the exposure and future life of the correspondence. For example, King Hyojong's (r. 1649–1659) secret letter to Chŏng T'aehwa (1602–1673) in the mid-seventeenth century asserts, "This letter should not be shown even to your sons, you have to be watchful!" However, we now read this letter in the published collection of Chŏng's writings.⁸⁶ In 2009, 299 secret letters that King Chŏngjo sent to Sim Hwanji (1730–1802) became known to the world. Although Sim was regarded as Chŏngjo's political opponent, the letters reveal how they collaborated behind the scenes. On many occasions, Chŏngjo wanted to make sure that all his secret letters would be destroyed after they were read. He offered Sim specific instructions about how to destroy them, including washing the ink away by soaking the letters in water, burning them, tearing them up, or returning them to him. However, Sim not only preserved the letters but also recorded the specific time of day when each one was delivered to him.⁸⁷ For Sim, these documents might have held vital political significance. Preserving and chronicling the exchanged letters allowed him to gain the upper hand in the political interaction with the monarch, as he would be able to disclose these letters to the public in the future (and the letters did go public, more than two hundred years after the actual correspondence!).

Secrecy remained near absent in actual practices of writing and reading letters. As Jacques Derrida's study on Western epistolary culture cogently shows, Chosŏn letters were also "half-private half-public, neither the one nor the other."⁸⁸ They "transgressed privacy and secrecy in part due to the

temporal discontinuity” embedded in reading the same letters for various purposes.⁸⁹ Resistance to complete contextualization characterized epistolarity in the Chosŏn period as in other cultures; letters could slip out of context at the discretion of any of the diverse people involved in writing, delivering, reading, preserving, and rereading them.

The physical form of Chosŏn letters also contributed to this half-private, half-public characteristic. Just like in the medieval Islamic world, “letters were single sheets of paper without outer wrapping.”⁹⁰ Not until the late eighteenth century did male elites begin to use envelopes for their private correspondence. Most letter writers, however, continued to write on a single piece of paper rather than following this savvy but costly practice. After filling a single sheet with messages, they folded it vertically multiple times into a thin and narrow shape. In this form, the back of the paper came to function as the outer cover: the names of both the sender and the receiver, along with the address, were written there. If they continued onto the back page, therefore, letter writers generally left generous blank space to be used as outer wrapping. With no letter-locking technologies or letter-sealing tradition as in European epistolary culture, access to the contents of Korean letters was neither impossible nor onerous. The multiple blank outer folds, however, meant that “reading letters addressed to others was a deliberate rather than casual act.”⁹¹

RESOURCEFUL WRITERS OR MULTIVALENT GENRE?

The habitual practice of letter writing among *yangban* elites not only facilitated the dissemination of the Korean alphabet but also pervaded every aspect of their daily life. The sheer number of letters, written in both vernacular Korean and literary Chinese, had exponentially increased since the late fifteenth century. Accordingly, the novelty of vernacular letter writing as a hip communicative tool had gradually faded away. Exchanges of letters became a daily routine for many elites. The socially interesting functions of letter writing, however, began to develop in this period. Letter writers channeled their imagination and individuality into both the physical shapes and the functions of the letters that they wrote and read.

The development of “spiral letters” was a distinctive characteristic of domestic correspondence in which both men and women joined. Spiral letter forms, which required both writers and readers to rotate the given pages while writing and reading them, began to appear in vernacular Korean

letters exchanged in elite households in the late fifteenth century. Their appearance in literary Chinese letters exchanged between male elites lagged behind, only beginning in the late sixteenth century. We can thus assume elite women's contribution to the configuration and dissemination of this particular nonlinear textual form. Literacy in Korean did not simply empower many elite women to become equal interlocutors for their male peers in epistolary space. More significantly, equipped with imaginative and innovative letter forms, elite women steered the Korean written culture into a new territory of spatial configuration of texts. As a consequence, the practices of writing and reading letters in Korea required not only intellectual commitments but also somatic and cognitive engagement. As a genuine vernacular form of textual layout, spiral letters also had sociocultural implications. Using spiral forms allowed male elites to signal that the contents of their letters were not suitable for circulation in the public domain.

The routinization of letter writing across elite society in the sixteenth century also led educated male elites to experiment with epistolary practices for diverse purposes. As a result, letter writing developed into the main discursive site in which major sociocultural changes took place. First, Confucian literati began to put together and read letters written by prominent masters, creating collections for study. They also revisited their own letters for moral cultivation while reflecting upon their state of mind when they had drafted particular letters. These academic applications leveraged the immediacy of letter writing in specific moments. This approach contrasted with Confucian classics, which were meant to instill normative and universal principles for all readers, irrespective of their cultural and temporal differences. Second, effective communication by letter promoted the social organization of elite groups, and vice versa. Local academies prospered across the country as academic and social centers for rural scholars, who capitalized on such social epistolary genres as circular letters to foster communication between scholar groups in different areas. These genres nicely coordinated with personal correspondence, making the epistolary networks denser and more intricate. The proliferation of group interactions among elites also entailed enhanced circulation of political news. Government newsletters, which had been originally distributed to incumbent officials, traveled on epistolary networks of both individual scholars and scholar groups across the country. Third, the convergence between the circulation of political information and elite social networks sparked the political ambition of nonofficial literati. As a consequence, the scholar groups began to

raise their political voices by developing a new political epistolary genre, joint memorials, which elevated their collectivity as a political weapon.

The epistles of the Chosŏn period illustrate the ways the tension between the totalizing and standardizing force of writing and the resourcefulness of individual practitioners unfolded and was negotiated.⁹² The appropriation of letters for diverse academic and sociopolitical schemes seems to epitomize how individual social actors moved beyond the boundary of the genre to pursue their sociocultural aspirations. The imaginative configuration of physical forms in vernacular Korean letters, meanwhile, reveals how letter writers tweaked the already established cultural norms, making their letter-writing practices interface with somatic and cognitive registers. This emphasis on individual letter writers' versatility, however, raises the question whether epistles as a genre involve the standardizing force as much as other genres of writing. More fundamentally, do letters have this totalizing tendency at all?

The global history of letter writing attests that the perimeter of the genre tends to be ambiguous at best across diverse cultures in different time periods.⁹³ In medieval China, for example, the contents of letters by the literati are not much different from scholarly or political treatises in many cases, when the epistolary formalities at the beginning and end are removed.⁹⁴ The epistolary discourse of a society thus overlaps with the development of other literary genres and probably all genres within it. Jacques Derrida, in a similar vein, claimed that letters transcend the conventional standards used in categorizing a genre: "Mixture is the letter, the epistle, which is not a genre but all genres, literature itself."⁹⁵ Letters can be appropriated, imitated, and converted into numerous other forms of literature, such as epistolary novels.⁹⁶ While grappling with the categorization of letters as a genre or genres, Claudine van Hensbergen emphasizes that each and every letter is "a discourse operating throughout texts and society" by interacting and overlapping with both other letters and other texts. With this kind of inherent intertextuality, letters functioned not as an epistolary genre but as "epistolary discourse."⁹⁷

Defining epistles as direct addresses between writer and receiver allows us to explore the extensive scope of epistolary practices.⁹⁸ The "I-you" polarity ultimately constitutes epistolarity.⁹⁹ Building upon this definition, this book explores a wide array of "applied epistolary practices" that diversified the subgenres under the umbrella category of epistles. Chosŏn elites expanded the capacity of their daily letter writing to encompass almost all

areas of major discursive change. These applied epistolary practices affirm the utmost adaptability of letters as “not a genre but all genres.”

THE MATERIALITY OF LETTERS

The myriad genres of epistles in late Chosŏn society were correlated with the multiplicity of their material forms. Different physical forms and material conditions suggest the disparate ways human agents handled and related to given letters for different purposes. Bibliographical analysis of the materiality of different letter forms therefore allows us to trace the social interactions surrounding them in ways not possible by simply examining their contents.

Although their sizes varied, most Chosŏn letters were written on a single sheet of paper.¹⁰⁰ This must have been the most suitable form to maintain the textual integrity of the letters while they passed through many hands on the way to their final destinations. The compilation of letters as books, however, transferred these loose manuscripts onto bound codices. Whether printed or hand-copied, letters positioned on the pages of books delivered cultural weight that their original forms had not carried. In premodern Korea, books were not simply used to transmit knowledge and information; they stored and materialized the cultural and intellectual pillars of the past generations. The lives of educated male elites revolved around books, the repository of sagacious words, which literary scholar Boudewijn Walraven aptly calls “the cult of books.”¹⁰¹ In book form, letters could be blended into preexisting scholarly genres and intellectual discourses to some extent. Letters in books did not always contain texts identical to their original manuscripts. The contents were frequently paraphrased beyond the normal editing processes; inappropriate parts were omitted; and nonlinear textual forms were rearranged to create a linear reading sequence. “The order of books” reined in the creativity of individual letter writers for the sake of orderly reading.¹⁰²

The books did not take codex forms only. Some compilers simply pasted a series of related letters together to form a single scroll. This format did not involve editing, such as paraphrasing or redacting, at all. As shown in figure 1.1, the different sizes and qualities of paper used for individual letters prevent them from having any visual and material coherence besides the fact that they are glued together. Because six letters out of seven bear spiral forms, moreover, the readers of this scroll might have had to juggle with both hands while unrolling, rolling, and rotating in the process of reading it.¹⁰³ We do not know whether it was the addressee himself or others who put



FIGURE 1.1. Seven letters that Pak Sech'ae (1631–1695) sent to Im Yŏng (1649–1696) in 1694. There are several other examples of scroll books that compile Pak's letters to Im; one of them, exchanged in 1680, includes as many as seventeen letters in one scroll (Goo2+AKS-BB55_Boo300387E). The measurements of this manuscript are not specified in the catalogue of the Jangseogak Royal Archives (Goo2+AKS-BB55_Boo300389E). Photo courtesy of the Academy of Korean Studies.

together these seven letters. Letter scrolls could have been produced to archive related letters either topically or chronologically, to prevent confusion in reconstructing the discussions developing in ongoing correspondence. Given that these letters were not mounted on a separate material support such as paper or silk, the production process remains incomplete in theory. The compiler might have had further plans for this seemingly haphazard scroll, which we cannot confirm without further evidence. Irrespective of the precise motive of the compiler, we can infer that Chosŏn people preserved and read the letters beyond their original contexts, which resulted in this kind of vernacular book form.

When male elites began to utilize epistolary genres to organize themselves into new social groups, the size of letters grew as both authorship and readership involved multiple people. Whereas personal letters do not normally exceed fifty centimeters in both length and width, many circular letters easily surpassed one meter in length or width. They grew enormous when including the signatures of the group members, which required generous blank space. The larger size of circular letters also implies the different kinds of social practices associated with this particular genre. A group of people participating in both writing and reading could have altered the material attributes of texts for ease of handling.

When nonofficial scholars mobilized to raise their voices on state political issues, the physical forms of their political epistles held more symbolic meaning. Joint memorials, which delivered their political opinions with the signatures of all participating scholars, grew colossal during the late Chosŏn period, because the physical texts materialized the scholars' politicized collectivity. The physical characteristics of the political texts also decided the ways these scholars performed their protests in the public space of both their home bases and Seoul, as well as en route to the capital. The massive physical forms legitimized their political motives through the hardship of producing and carrying the given text to present it to the throne. The materiality of political epistles, when apposite to the goals of protesters, endowed them with moral superiority that made their voices more powerful and persuasive.

LETTER-WRITING MANUALS

Although epistles as a genre remained vaguely defined and hybridized with other forms of writing, their material configurations were adapted to

disparate social demands. In other words, the appropriation of epistles for diverse purposes and the subsequent transformations of their physical forms characterize how the epistolary culture developed in Chosŏn society from the sixteenth century. This diversification of correspondence in social and discursive interactions was a far cry from the standardization of epistolary practices. The production and consultation of letter-writing manuals did not thrive in Chosŏn society, unlike in almost all other countries, where the resourcefulness of individual writers was counterbalanced by the proclivity to standardize.

Epistolary guides produced in China, such as Sima Guang's (1019–1086) *The Etiquette of Letter Writing* (Shuyi), Yuan (1279–1368) period encyclopedic collections (Jujia Biyong Shilei Quanjì), and *The Collected Letters of Ouyang Xiu* [1007–1072] and *Su Shi* [1037–1101] (Ou Su shoujian), occasionally are mentioned in Korean sources.¹⁰⁴ However, these titles do not seem to have been widely circulated. It is notable that Chosŏn elites consulted only pre-Ming letter-writing manuals, although the proliferation of commercial printing in the late Ming and early Qing sparked the wide circulation of letter-writing manuals in China. This was also different from contemporary Japanese society, where elementary textbooks took the form of exchanged letters (J. *ōraimono*), teaching novice learners both basic knowledge on various subjects and letter-writing skills. Similar manuals for literary Chinese letters were sporadically produced in Korea. The earliest extant title is Yi Ŏnjŏk's (1491–1553) *Collected Letters* (Ŏnjjip), which remains in various manuscript versions.¹⁰⁵ It is recorded that *The Examples and Formats for Korean People* (Tongin yesik) put together by Kim Chŏng (1486–1521) included a chapter on letter writing, but no copies have survived.¹⁰⁶ With the exception of *The Categorized Collection of Letter Forms* (Kansik yup'yŏn), published in 1739 along with the previous two works, all other titles were published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁰⁷

Most vernacular Korean letter-writing manuals were also published and widely disseminated at that time.¹⁰⁸ This period is significant not only because commercial publications (*panggakpon*) peaked, thanks to woodblock printing, but also because the introduction of lithographic printing technology made cheap mass publication possible. Even with these letter-writing manuals, the standardizing effect does not appear to have been consequential. For instance, *The Augmented and Supplemented Reading of Vernacular Letters* (Chingbo ōngandok), the most widely disseminated title in various versions, did not provide model letters for correspondence

between husband and wife or between father and daughter—the two dyads showing the most frequent exchanges of vernacular Korean letters in actual life.¹⁰⁹ The inclusion of motley contents, mostly unrelated, also implies that these publications were heavily influenced by the commercial interests of publishers. Many titles include information about family rituals and etiquette along with letter-writing skills in the same volume. In some, basic historical knowledge, such as the list of all Chosŏn kings and the anniversaries of their passing, and rules for poetic rhymes and metrics were also included.¹¹⁰ This book format incorporating miscellaneous materials resembles the daily-life encyclopedia, which was very popular in late Ming and early Qing China when commercial printing proliferated.¹¹¹ Book buyers with limited means wanted to fulfill diverse obligations with the purchase of a single title. The production and circulation of both literary Chinese and vernacular Korean letter-writing manuals seem to have been more closely correlated with the technological supports for commercial printing and thriving book markets than the individual letter writers' need to consult them.

Chosŏn letter writers seem to have learned letter-writing skills and epistolary protocols through actual social interactions and emotional interchanges. Instead of absorbing preset epistolary norms, they constantly monitored “the possibilities of writing in the letter genre and of language as the letter genre manifested them.” This “epistolary self-reflexivity” allowed Chosŏn letter writers to make sense of and negotiate with preexisting cultural norms and political power relationships through the seemingly mundane and trivial practice of letter writing.¹¹²

The Rise and Fall of a Spatial Genre

WHEN letter writing was no longer a special means of communication dominated by a few male elites, its practitioners began to experiment with the physical shapes of letters that they wrote and read. Most notably, some users of the Korean alphabet created nonlinear textual forms such as “spiral letters” from as early as the late fifteenth century.¹ To produce this peculiar form, letter writers had to rotate the texts counterclockwise by 90 degrees several times to complete their messages (figure 2.1).² This spiral movement in writing letters brought about the same bodily motion in reading them. Writers and readers became engaged in the same physical movement in handling the letters, in addition to sharing an emotional and intellectual commitment to the contents. The scrutiny of material forms of spiral letters, therefore, unfolds the social practices through which people actually wrote and read them, details that their contents alone would not reveal.³ Investigating the “traces” of the bodily also enables us to reconstruct two related cognitive processes: (1) how the letter writers envisioned the layouts of their letters on a blank sheet of paper; and (2) how the recipients figured out where to start reading and where to move on from one part of the text to another.⁴ The implication that letters substitute for the physical presence of the senders was intensified because their “bodily” movement and “cognitive” process embedded in spiral forms evoked their presence as something tangible.⁵ The spiral forms added crucial elements of meaning to the process of deciphering the texts.

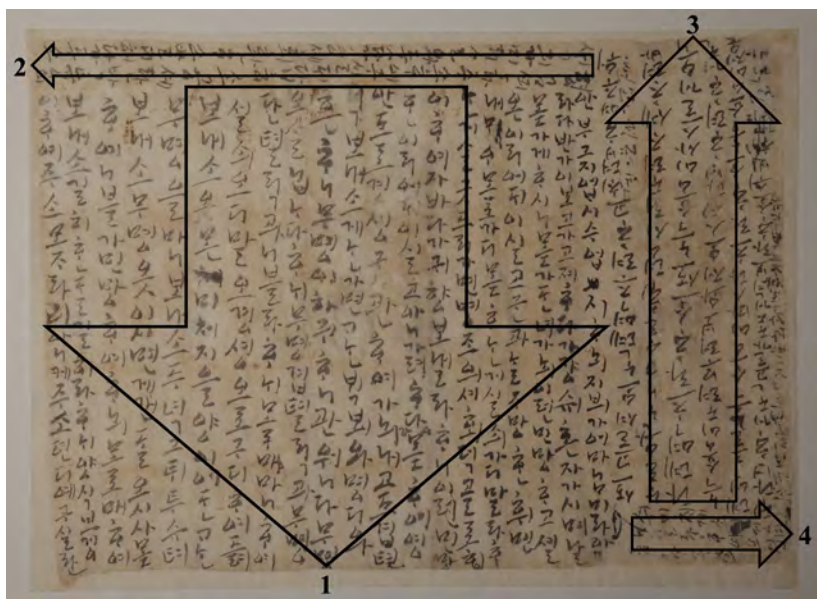


FIGURE 2.1. One of the two oldest existing vernacular Korean letters written by Na Sin'göl (1461–1524) purportedly in the 1490s and sent to his wife, Madam Maeng. 49.9×34.9 cm. Daejeon Municipal Museum. Arrows added by the author. Photo courtesy of Daejeon Municipal Museum.

The spatial organization of text was deeply embedded in the cultural, social, and political norms that influenced how people produced, inscribed, circulated, and interpreted written works. This was even more the case in letter writing because certain margins or spaces on the page denoted either the sender's deference to the addressee or the physical and social distance between them.⁶ Margins and blanks in texts always delivered ideological connotations.⁷ These spaces also offered room where social and cultural minors could challenge the legitimacy of norms set by elites, which occupied the central space of the pages.⁸ The organization of textual space in Chosŏn spiral letters delivered more complicated information. First, the manipulation of margins accompanied multiple textual directions, which inextricably entwined somatic movements with cognitive interpretations. Second, unlike commentaries or annotations, the texts in the marginal space were continuations of the main contents. In other words, the appropriation of

“textual margins” in Korean epistolary culture defies the general notion about the relation between main texts and marginal notes.⁹ Chosŏn letters call for a reconsideration of the very definition of margins.

The examination of Korean spiral letters, however, poses a crucial challenge in research methodology. Whereas manuscript letters bearing spiral forms abound and are well preserved, there remain no documented records about why and how Chosŏn letter writers produced and circulated spiral letters. They did not even name the form. People might have found nothing extraordinary about spiral forms due to their ubiquitous and quotidian usages.¹⁰ Certain fundamental cultural practices, though distinctive to our modern eyes, could have been so generally accepted that they never needed to be articulated.¹¹

The absence of documented records, however, does not prevent intellectual inquiries. Theoretical breakthroughs on the limitations of archives, developed in African American studies, are useful in grappling with this kind of research problem. Research on slavery in the transatlantic world exemplifies the challenges that existing documents present to scholars interested in the histories of the oppressed. The archive can be a place of absence, largely a site excluding the voices of women, African slaves, and other people of color, which makes it difficult to recover aspects of their culture and agency.¹² The notion of “critical fabulation” has been proposed as a tool to make productive sense of the gaps and silence in the archive, where the voices of enslaved women are absent.¹³ A writing methodology that combines historical research with critical theory and intellectual imagination makes it possible for us to “tell an impossible story” through exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive in fashioning a narrative.¹⁴

Korean spiral letters began to develop in domestic correspondence including women, who were mostly left out of official history and government documentation, unless they held some power or had encounters with authorities. Although the act of writing letters enabled Chosŏn women to exercise some agency, their behavioral patterns and cultural proclivity was not deemed deserving of being documented in official archives. We do not have self-description about their own epistolary practices. Even though the content of women’s letters offers no hints about the origins and functions of spiral forms in Chosŏn epistolary culture, examining the documents’ physical forms reveals some meaningful information about how women letter writers materialized their agency. The method of “critical bibliography,” the study of texts as material objects, takes manuscript letters themselves as the

corpus of solid evidence. A similar methodological approach is advocated by young scholars in Native American and indigenous studies who call for new methodologies focusing on the close observation of material objects produced by Native Americans to overcome the silence on and biases toward them in the archives of early America.¹⁵ Likewise, the bibliographical information that we discover from Korean spiral letters complements the limited archives, which reveal only piecemeal pictures of women's lives in the voices of male elites. Comparison with the textual cultures of other East Asian countries, moreover, helps us expand the interpretive scope. This bibliographical evidence can be accepted with a reasonable degree of certainty when supported by comparative studies and theoretical rumination.

UNRAVELING SPIRAL LETTERS

This analysis is based upon Chosŏn letters in their original forms, most of which were written by members of *yangban* aristocratic families. Many of these letters have been preserved as family treasures by the descendants of senders or recipients. To what extent did existing spiral letters represent their actual usages in social life during the late Chosŏn period? Researchers may be tempted to create statistics about their geographical distribution, the time periods when they were used, and the social status of the letter writers. The problem is that only a few prestigious elite clans during the Chosŏn period enjoyed the cultural privilege and economic means that enabled them to preserve these letters in their family archives.¹⁶ The archives encapsulate political hegemony and cultural dominance, the exertion of which decided the life span of material texts and their transmission to future generations.

Some letters, moreover, survived not as archived texts but as part of grave goods. For example, 185 letters were found during the excavation of the tomb of Madam Kim, who died in the 1580s, for relocation in 1977. These letters were written to her by her husband and natal parents.¹⁷ In 1989, another batch of 172 letters was recovered from Madam Ha's tomb, which were exchanged with her husband, Kwak Chu (1569–1617), and her daughter, who had married out.¹⁸ The discovery of a vernacular Korean spiral letter in Yi Ŭngt'ae's (1556–1586) tomb in 1998, meanwhile, received much public attention as an exemplary love letter of the Chosŏn period. Yi's wife wrote this letter to her deceased husband; it was buried with a pair of shoes woven with locks of her hair as love tokens (figure 2.2).¹⁹ These letters, mostly

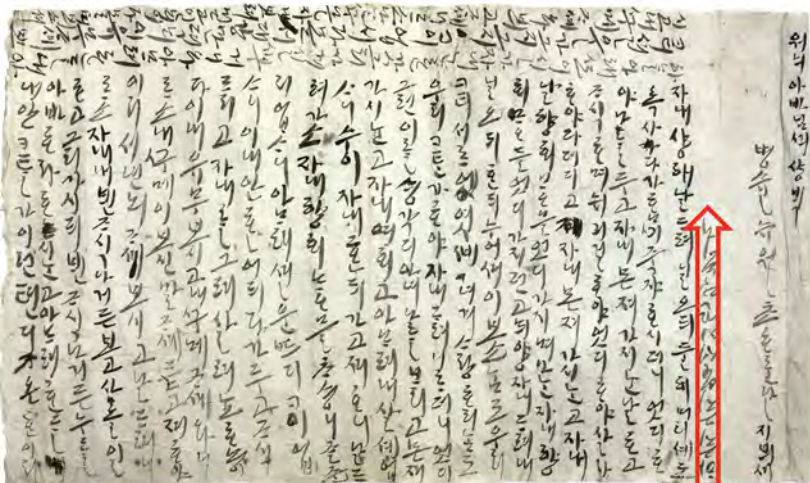


FIGURE 2.2. The letter written by Yi Ŭngt'ae's wife in 1586 that was exhumed from his tomb in 1998. Note that the closing remark on the third line from the right was written upside down. As a result, this letter requires the reader to handle three textual sections heading in three different directions. 58.5×34 cm. Arrow added by the author. Photo courtesy of Andong National University Museum.

written in vernacular Korean, offer vivid glimpses of elite epistolary practices using both spiral and nonspiral forms. However, they represent only the life of the elite class, who could afford such textual practices during their life and decent burials after their death. Some letters, moreover, survived not as texts but as repurposed paper. For example, the letters discovered in Madam Kim's tomb had been crumpled and used as cushions between the corpse and the coffin.²⁰ We do not know how many letters were recycled like this and how many of them were spiral letters. Statistics based on existing letters will remain provisional at best and show only a partial picture of Chosŏn epistolary culture, unless and until there are further archaeological discoveries.

Some recent discoveries suggest that the spiral form could have been used beyond the elite class. In 2010, for instance, eighty-five letters from Chosŏn interpreters, which had been sent to an interpreter of the Sō daimyo from 1795 to 1810, were discovered in Japan.²¹ Seventy-two letters in this batch were written in Korean, and some of them bear spiral forms. Official interpreters during the late Chosŏn period had formed secondary status

groups, *chungin*, whose members held petty clerical positions or practiced other vocations that required special expertise such as medical doctors, astrologers, or legal specialists as well as interpreters. The complexly intertwined cultural and intellectual interactions between *chungin* and *yangban* elites might explain their shared epistolary styles.²² The fact that spiral letters were sent to foreigners, however, is significant. Chosŏn interpreters would not have sent their letters in spiral form unless they knew that the Japanese recipients were already familiar with this layout through their continued exposure to Chosŏn written culture.

Some scattered examples evince that epistolary customs did spill over to a few nonelite outliers who came from even humbler origins than the *chungin* class. During the late Chosŏn period, high-ranking court ministers hired private servants, *kyŏmin*. Most of these *kyŏmin* came from a commoner background, and they performed petty tasks, from preparing tea or medicine to taking care of their masters' bedding and table settings. Their duties also included sending and receiving letters on behalf of their masters. For instance, Hong Ponghan (1713–1778), a leading political figure of the Noron faction in the eighteenth century, hired a *kyŏmin* named An Suuk (d.u.), who was exceptionally good at drafting various writings. Hong habitually consulted An in writing personal letters as well as official reports to government offices and even memorials to the throne.²³ It is unlikely that all servants were as well versed as An in epistolary protocols, particularly because nonelites' literacy remains questionable.²⁴ Nonelites, moreover, did not use epistles for sociopolitical empowerment until the late nineteenth century. Taking all these circumstances into account, it would be reasonable to consider the proliferation of epistolary practices as an elite phenomenon for most of the Chosŏn period. Nevertheless, ruling out the possibility of nonelite participation would skew the records of actual epistolary interactions in the Chosŏn society.

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

The letter in figure 2.3 was produced in 1811, and it displays 360-degree spiral effects. The letter writers indented the beginning of their message radically toward the lower-left side of the paper while leaving a generous margin on top. When the paper was filled to the lower-left edge, they turned it counterclockwise by 90 degrees and continued to write in the left half of the upper margin. When that was filled, they again turned the paper counterclockwise

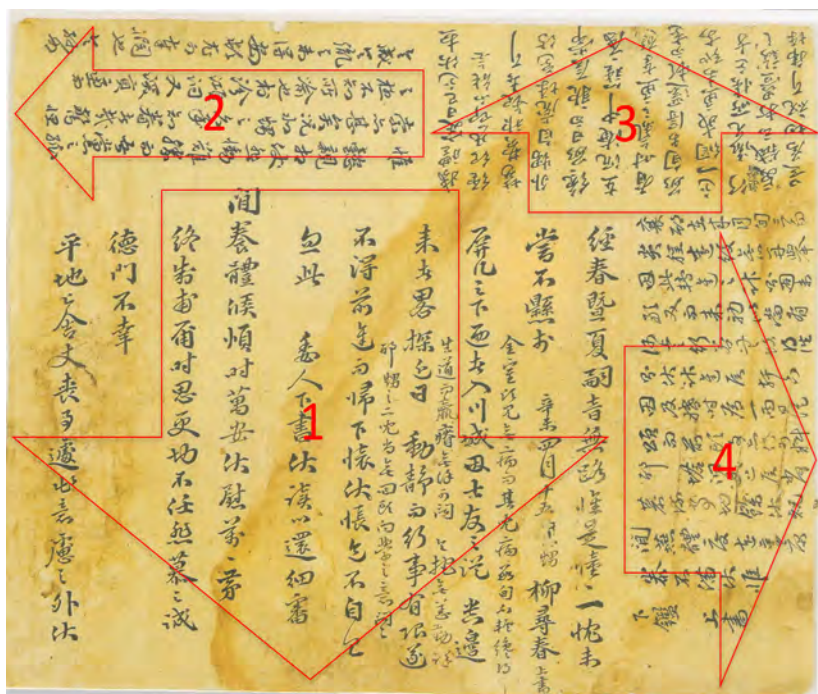


FIGURE 2.3. Yu Simch'un's (1762–1834) spiral letter written in 1811. Image from Kukhak Chinhŭng Yŏn'gu Saŏp Ch'ujin Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Andong Kosŏng Yi-sŏ Imch'ŏnggak p'yŏn*, 161. 41.3×34 cm. Arrows added by the author. Photo courtesy of the Jangseogak Archives at the Academy of Korean Studies (entrusted by Andong Pŏphŭng Kosŏng Yi-sŏ chongga Imch'ŏnggak).

by 90 degrees and continued to write in the right half of the upper margin. When the contents even filled up the right margin of the paper, the letter could be read from all four directions. This particular spiral letter exhibits four distinctive characteristics: (1) both writers and readers have to rotate the given page to handle it; (2) a single text is divided into several parts, laid out in different places on the same page; (3) these different parts do not create subordinate relationships with one another, unlike marginalia or annotations; and (4) the spiral layout is integrated into the writing practice rather than through a separate process of designing textual space.

In spite of the shared idea of rotating the page, writers' decisions on the degree of spiral effects varied from 90 to 360 degrees. Inchoate spiral letters with only a 90-degree spiral effect began to appear in the early fifteenth

century, written by male elites in literary Chinese. These letters, which added only one or two lines in the narrow upper margin, do not present the systematic application of spiral effects to writing and reading. The writers must have turned the page by 90 degrees simply to use the margins as extra writing space. Full-fledged spiral forms initially emerged in vernacular Korean letters produced in the late fifteenth century, several decades after the invention of the Korean alphabet (see figure 2.1). They began to develop in the domestic contexts where men and women read and wrote together within elite households. Female writers wrote more spiral letters with more extreme spiral effects than did their male counterparts. Male elites' letters written in literary Chinese began to exhibit full spiral forms only in the late sixteenth century, which suggests that this particular form was popular in vernacular Korean letters first and then influenced male elites' literary Chinese letters. Considering that not every letter writer produced spiral letters, it does not seem that male elites randomly chose this textual form. In Korea, as in India, where writers often chose among different scripts, social actors' choice of a language defined social significations because it either confirmed their affiliation in the existing sociotextual community or gave rise to a new community.²⁵ In the same vein, Chosŏn letter writers chose a spiral form from among other alternatives, thus joining a particular socio-textual community. For the distinctiveness of Korean spiral letters compared to nonlinear texts developed in China and Japan, the contribution of women who wrote in vernacular Korean script deserves due credit.

The imposition of spiral effects on letters increased their visual complexity, which slowed down the process of writing and reading them. The more extreme the spiral effects, the longer it took to decipher a given letter. The decision to apply spiral effects does not seem to have been governed by the contents. Existing spiral letters cover a variety of topics, including family affairs, academic debates, social issues, and political problems. The division of textual parts through the application of spiral effects does not necessarily correspond to changes of subject in the given letters, either. The need to turn the page could come at any moment in the narrative's development. However, no spiral forms appear in documents registered at the state offices, such as petitions and memorials. The spiral forms never carried over to the pages of books, which were closely linked to official history, orthodox scholarship, and literary oeuvres: textual domains that male Confucian elites dominated. Spiral letters were used only in nonofficial settings. The absence of any apparent pattern as well as the usage only in private settings suggest that

spiral forms developed into a vernacular textual style for diverse purposes of self-fashioning.

NONLINEAR TEXTS IN EAST ASIA

The organizing principles of nonlinear textual layouts that developed in other countries under the influence of literary Chinese classical tradition offer some clues about the origins of Chosŏn spiral letters.

The Luoshu as the Prototype of Nonlinear Texts

In the ancient Chinese classical tradition, symbolic abstractions contributed to the prevalence of geometric texts bearing nonlinear forms particularly during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE) and the Qin (221–207 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) dynasties. The earliest example appeared in *The Luo River Script* (Luoshu) and *The Yellow River Chart* (Hetu), which represented the relationship between the terrestrial and the celestial. According to the legend in *The Book of History* (Shangshu), Yu the Great, the founder of the Xia (circa 2070–1600 BCE) dynasty, obtained the script from the tortoise of the Luo River. In the state formation of early China, *The Luo River Script* functioned as “a talisman of great magic power, the representation of the virtues of excellent leadership, as well as the sacred law and order.”²⁶ Both Confucians and Daoists employed this symbol of magico-religious perfection and sociopolitical legitimacy to explicate the correlation between the universe and human life. The practical application of *The Luo River Script* numerology was closely related to the development of such ideas as yin and yang, the Five Elements, the Eight Trigrams, the Nine Palaces, and the Ten Thousand Things (figure 2.4). The result was a proliferation of diagrams derived from *The Luo River Script* in which texts were prone to be multidirectional. The numerological theory from *The Luo River Script* branched out to the practices of divination, geomancy, astronomy, astrology, alchemy, and fate calculation, resulting in the nonlinear composition of the texts used for such practices.²⁷ These texts subsequently influenced the modes of artistic expression and architectural structures across East Asia. Numerous textual examples of such cases are preserved in the Daoist canon (Daozang) consisting of about 1,400 texts along with occasional archaeological discoveries.²⁸

Korean literati must have been familiar with these diagrams through their classical training. However, it does not seem that this exposure carried

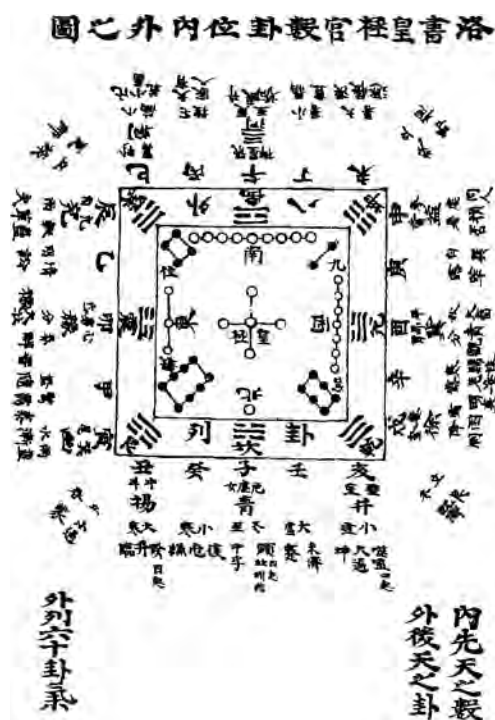


FIGURE 2.4. *The Inner and Outer Diagrams of the August Ultimate, [Nine] Palaces, and the Positions of Trigrams in “Luoshu.”* Note that *The Luo River Script* is embedded in the innermost square. Image from Chǒng Chedu, *Hagok chip*, vol. 20. In *Han’guk munjip ch’onggan* 160:506L (http://db.itkc.or.kr/data/imagedb/ARTWORK/ITKC_MO_0433A_A160_506D_010.jpg). Photo courtesy of the Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics.

over to the habits of textual composition in general. Aside from their commonality as nonlinear texts, these Chinese examples differ radically from Korean spiral letters in terms of organizing principles. Unlike the integrated contents and forms in Korean spiral letters, the Chinese diagrams display meticulous designs that must have preceded the addition of textual contents. While a single text forms multiple text blocks in Korean spiral letters, different kinds of information fill different textual parts in Chinese occult miscellanies. These pieces of information dialogically interact to constitute the diagrams as a microcosm of Heaven and/or Earth, unlike Korean spiral letters, in which different textual parts merely maintain the sequential relation. The only commonality between them is the act of rotating texts in the process of producing and deciphering them.

The Chu Silk Manuscript

The textual layout of *The Chu Silk Manuscript* (Changsha Zidanku Chu Boshu) shows more similarities with Korean spiral letters than with the geometric diagrams because it contains prose narratives. This manuscript, dated at around 300 BCE, consists of three textual parts: an eight-line text and a thirteen-line text at the center, surrounded by a set of texts on four sides. The short text at the center accounts for the creation of the Chu (770–223 BCE) people. The thirteen-line text written upside down elaborates on the events when Heaven was in disarray.²⁹ The surrounding text with twelve subsections describes the calendrical rules of each month, accompanied by colored icons of the monthly gods. The four corners are adorned with symbolic trees. About the relationship among the three texts, it has been argued that the eight-line text is upright due to its positive content, whereas the thirteen-line text is upside down due to its negative content,³⁰ and that the layout of multiple texts in the same space generated hierarchies among them. Readers should thus focus on the texts at the center of the page. The same is true in the debates over reading order. Some scholars argue that the eight-line text should be read first, whereas others claim that the thirteen-line text should be read first.³¹ Little attention has been given to the surrounding texts in the margins.

The layout of the surrounding texts, however, made reading this manuscript from all four directions possible, which is analogous to Korean spiral letters.³² The positions of twelve icons on the four edges and four holy trees at the corners have been claimed to govern the textual directionality. The pictorial images would have been drawn first, and then texts were arranged to align with the images. In this integrated relationship between images and texts, the surrounding texts are “picture-texts-cum-arranged-texts” (*tuwen bing paiwen*).³³ In other words, without images, the text would not have had to bear nonlinear forms. In a similar vein, the layout of this manuscript has been said to correspond to the diagram of the cosmic model (*shitu*), which makes the peculiar layout of the manuscript the outgrowth of various geometric diagrams.

Despite the shared idea of rotating texts, *The Chu Silk Manuscript* also differs from spiral letters: the multiple texts perch on a single page; there is a hierarchy among them; and the images force the writer to predetermine the textual directionality.

Palindromic Poems

In medieval China, palindromic poems, most famously *The Picture of the Turning Sphere* (*Xuanjitu*), gained popularity. This textual form, consisting of 840 characters in 29-by-29-line square form, can be deciphered in as many as 7,858 different ways, which “upset the habit of linear scanning involved in reading.”³⁴ The development of various palindromes was closely related to the nonliterary texts widely circulated in this period. By the Tang period, astrographical images had become part of everyday life for ordinary Chinese people by virtue of the availability of calendars and almanacs.³⁵ People needed to have cognitive sensibility to capture the “circular” configuration of Heaven embedded in the medieval Chinese imagination and its textual manifestations.³⁶ Calendrical designs and astrological charts thus required their users to apply “leaps,” “rotations,” and “re-positions” to extract the needed information. These unconventional ways of handling texts with calendrical information might have influenced the composition of “circular texts” in poetic compositions.³⁷ The guideline for reading overlaid on Lady Su’s poems clearly confirms this argument, which is analogous to 3-by-3 square composition and *mi* (Ch.) pattern radius, which is the artistic and architectural patterns stemming from *Luoshu*.³⁸ The magico-religious imagination, derived from the *Luoshu* magic square and the *Hetu* diagram, persisted in medieval China, which ingrained the nonlinear proclivity in literary production.

The organizing principle of medieval Chinese palindromes, originating from the *Luoshu* magic square, demanded careful design of textual space before filling it with content, which could have involved consideration of the total number of characters and their division based upon the metric rules of Chinese poems. In this respect, it appears improbable that spiral letters originated from Chinese palindromes. However, this idea of rotating texts embedded in Chinese palindromes and moral implications connected to it had been known to Chosŏn women and figured prominently in the development of similar textual configuration in their embroideries before they attained vernacular Korean literacy.³⁹

Women’s Epistles in Heian Japan

Some epistles written by aristocratic women in Heian (794–1185) Japan also show nonlinear textual layouts, seemingly analogous to Korean spiral

letters. The writers began by radically indenting to the middle of the page and leaving generous upper margins. When there was no space remaining at the lower left edge, they continued to write on the upper margin and then moved on to the blank space on the right side of the page, which was called “sleeve writing” (J. *sodegaki*).⁴⁰ Although Japanese letter writers did not rotate the page, the sequence of textual movement—first to the center of the page, moving to the upper margin, and then to the right margin—is identical to that of Korean spiral letters. Just like Korean spiral letters, the parts written on the upper margin and the blank space on the right are not marginal, but the continuation of the contents. This sectioning of letters and crowding the words thrived as an epistolary vogue in Heian Japan; it was not the result of an effort to save paper.⁴¹

Besides this example of “sleeve writing,” other examples in the manuscript cultures of the Heian period reveal the meticulous manipulation of textual spaces. For instance, “scattered writing” (J. *chirashi gaki*) developed in *Kana* composition and spacing, in which the columns neither start at the same height nor stay straight all the time. The quaint and unpredictable nature of textual layouts, some argue, played a significant role in expressing the emotional sensitivity of each writer.⁴² The same examples, however, helped other scholars to debunk the nationalistic historiography in Japan, which ascribes to this Heian calligraphic tradition unique ethnolinguistic attributes. The operation of calligraphy in this period, for instance, included something specific to both Heian culture and the Tang calligraphic legacy; “scattered writing” was the Heian variation of the Tang calligraphic model in its smoothing of the strict striation of space.⁴³ If this argument holds true, the sleeve writing in some Heian epistles, which derails the reading of vertical columns from right to left, could also be explicated as an attempt to go against the linearity embedded in the Chinese calligraphic tradition.

Despite the affinity in textual layouts between sleeve writing and spiral letters, there is no evidence showing that Heian manuscript culture had been transmitted to Korea. Writers and readers of Heian letters, moreover, never rotated their letters. Nevertheless, the commonality between these two cases suggests an interesting factor that might have contributed to the development of peculiar textual layouts in both countries. Both forms came from female brushes in the inchoate stage of vernacular culture in the respective societies. That is, with multiple options, the users of the new linguistic mode displayed the propensity to flout preexisting textual conventions. Just

as some Heian letter writers attempted to defy the strict striation in Chinese calligraphic styles through either “scattering” texts or sectioning them in “sleeves” of the page, Chosŏn letter writers defied the linear textual layouts by rotating the given page to generate spiral forms.

Although nonlinear texts developed in China and Japan exhibit some commonalities with Korean spiral letters, there is no evidence that the spiral forms were derived from them. The combination of rotating the given page and sectioning a single text appeared only in the Chosŏn epistolary practices.

SPIRAL LETTERS IN PRACTICE: FOUR HYPOTHESES

With no evidence of outside influences in the development of spiral letters, the bibliographical analysis of spiral letters allows us to reconstruct how writers and readers could have handled them. The remnants of bodily engagement by both writers and readers help us figure out possible motivations behind the popularity of spiral letters.

Saving Textual Space

First, letter writers may have been attempting to save paper by packing all of the content onto a single sheet without moving on to a second page. All existing studies remarking on spiral forms simply present this hypothesis as the sole explanation,⁴⁴ apparently attributed to the insufficient supply of paper in the Chosŏn period. Although not completely groundless, this claim holds relevance only in two cases. First, the literary Chinese letters with only one or two lines added in the narrow upper margins could be understood this way. However, these letter writers turned the page by 90 degrees only once in most cases; thus, their letters did not develop full-fledged spiral effects that would require bodily movement integrated into the reading and writing processes from beginning to end. The other case is letters written on preprinted or prestamped stationery with lines (figure 2.5). Because letter writers could not fit all the content into the generously spaced lines at the center of the sheet, they often used the marginal space by applying spiral effects several times. Even in these cases, however, we cannot establish a solid logical connection between the intention to save textual space and the decision to rotate the given page. If paper had to be fully used, it would have made more sense to focus on controlling font size and line spacing.⁴⁵ As

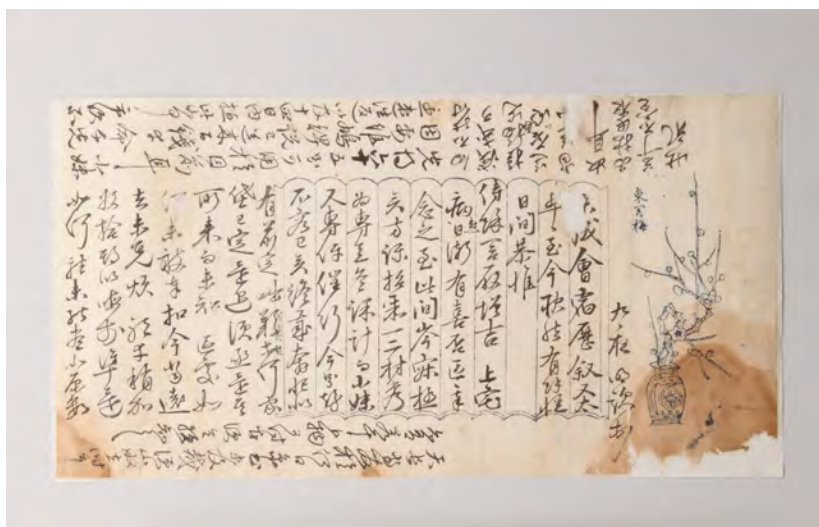


FIGURE 2.5. Song Myŏnghŭm's (1705–1768) letter written on printed stationery (*top*) and a woodblock for the production of stationery for letter writing (*bottom*). Daejeon Municipal Museum, hyangsa nŭkch'ŏn 1543 & sŏnsa kit'ak 2331. Photo courtesy of Daejeon Municipal Museum.



FIGURE 2.6. Crossed letter from Jane Austen to her sister, Cassandra, June 20–22, 1808. Morgan Library and Museum, New York (MA 977.16). Photo courtesy of Morgan Library and Museum.

shown in the case of Heian letters, the letter writers did not have to rotate the page even when moving on to different textual sections. The idea remains arbitrary at best, regardless of its potential functionality.

Letter writers' seemingly inconsistent use of spiral effects also makes the claim that they were saving textual space unconvincing. Some wrote spiral letters but others did not. Even frequent users of spiral letters sometimes did not write in spiral form. While some densely spaced letters did not employ spiral forms, some other letters with vast blank space bore spiral forms. This unpredictability invalidates the space economy argument.

Crossed letters from Victorian England offer good examples of how the intention to save paper could give rise to complexity in textual space. The above image is Jane Austen's letter to her sister, Cassandra (figure 2.6). The right half contains two separate passages of writing, one written over the other at a right angle. British letter writers crossed their letters in this way to save postage, which was charged by the number of sheets of paper. The letter writers' economic considerations overwhelmed the efficiency of reading, which prompted the development of this eccentric letter form. Crossed letters, however, continued to be used even after the introduction of Penny

Black postage in 1840, through which letters of up to half an ounce were to be delivered at a flat rate of one penny. This indicates that crossed letters appealed to some British writers for reasons other than saving textual space.⁴⁶ Likewise, we cannot explain why Chosŏn letter writers rotated the page only with the preservation theory due to other possibilities discussed below.

Calligraphic Aesthetics

Upside-down forms, which also required writers and readers to rotate the given page, thrived in texts produced in the countries under Muslim jurisdiction. Korean spiral letters particularly resemble spiral texts popular in Yemen.⁴⁷ The Yemeni writers strove for calligraphic exquisiteness by applying spiral effects, through which the contents determine the textual forms and vice versa.⁴⁸ Therefore, as the second possibility, Chosŏn letter writers may have been concerned about the aesthetic quality of their letters. However, they do not appear to have considered textual elegance when employing spiral effects.

First, there are a considerable number of spiral letters that continue to the back of the page (figure 2.7). As seen in this image, the writer tried painstakingly to write legibly on the back by placing the lines of text between lines already written on the front of the page. Nevertheless, in many cases, the doubling up of writing on front and back made the texts smudged, due to the sheerness of the paper.⁴⁹ In the Chosŏn epistolary culture, this use of backs of pages was associated with letter writers' sociocultural positions in terms of both gender and linguistic mode. I have found many more women's letters written on both sides of the page than men's letters, and vernacular Korean letters addressed to women tended to continue to the backs of the pages. Women's spiral letters sloppily written on low-quality paper hardly show artistic consideration.

Second, the calligraphic albums compiled by Chosŏn elites do not exhibit their special appreciation for spiral letters. Most of these collections, in which original letters were pasted into blank books, were put together by lineage groups to accentuate the literary and intellectual heritage of their families. Other collections compiled manuscript letters of prominent scholars, influential political figures, and highly regarded calligraphers. Amid these attempts to preserve either ancestors' handwriting or the good calligraphy of renowned figures, there is no sign of a preference for spiral forms.

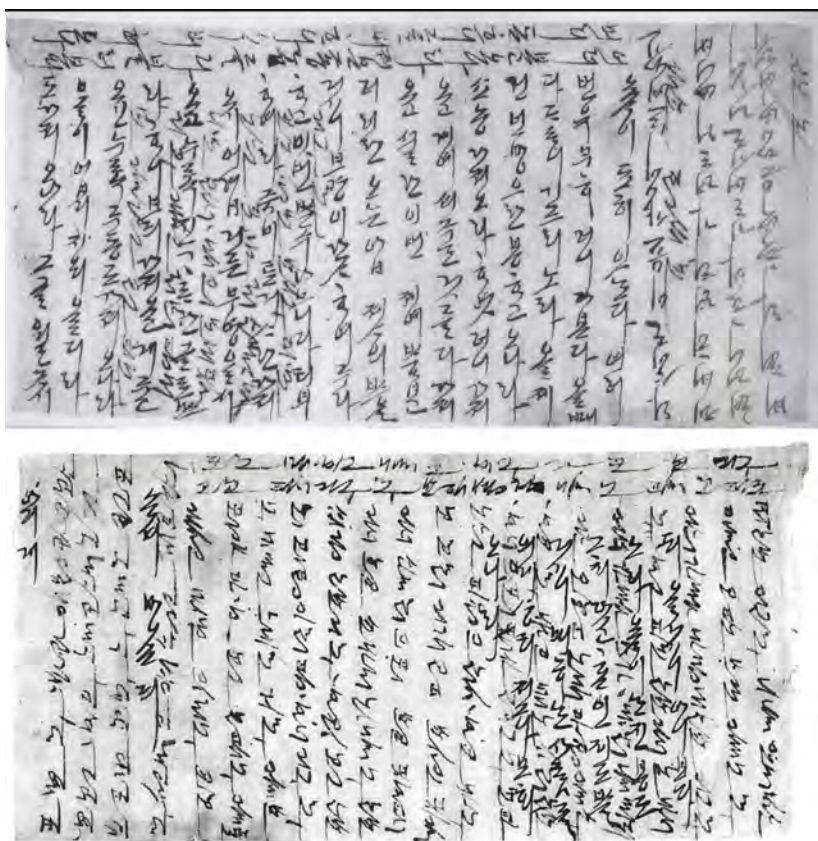


FIGURE 2.7. Madam Cho's (1625–1683) letter to her daughter-in-law. Image from Kukhak Chinhŭng Yŏn'gu Saŏp Ch'ujin Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Hoedŏk Ūnjin Song-ssi T'oero Tongch'undang Song Chun'gil ka p'yŏn* I, 47–48. Photo courtesy of Daejeon Municipal Museum.

The writers' fame or illustrious pedigree governed the value of writings more than graphic peculiarity in their spatial layout.

Even with no apparent preference for spiral letters, letter albums occasionally include manuscript letters with the 90-degree spiral effect, which the album compilers created from originally linear letters. They repositioned the letters to fit them to the size of the album pages. The letter in figure 2.8 is such a case. Two lines on the upper margin were cut and pasted from the left edge. This letter is extraordinary in that the first four lines from the right edge are actually the ending part. We can assume that the letter writer left a

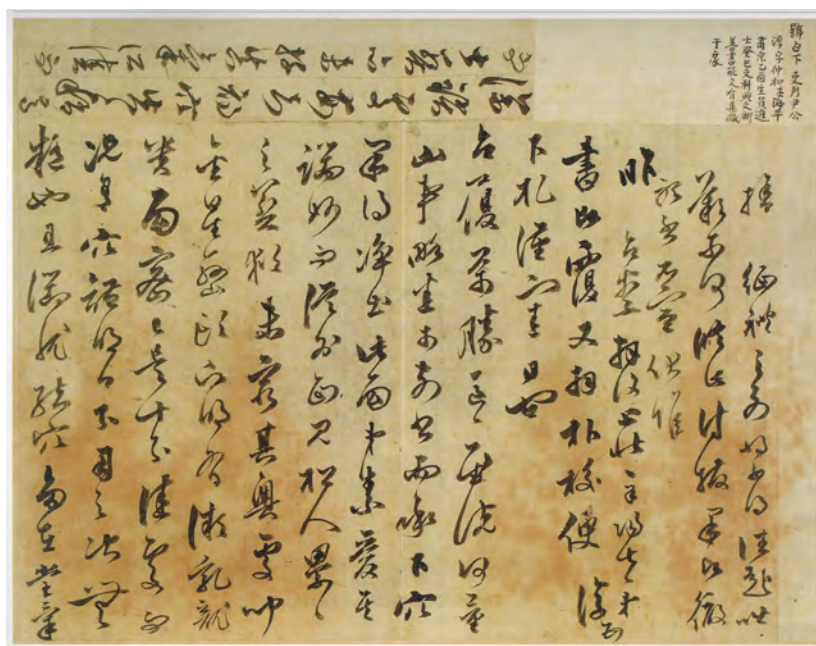


FIGURE 2.8. Yun Sun's (1680–1741) letter to his elder brother. 42×28.8 cm. Image from Kungnip Chungang Pangmulgwan Yöksabu, ed., *Kanch'al yi: Sōnin tūl ūi p'yōnji moūmjip*, 175. Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Korea.

margin on the right side of the page in the expectation of using it as the outer cover after folding it, which ended up becoming writing space for the contents running over from the leftward progression. Because the album compiler added information about the letter writer in the upper-right corner of the page, moreover, all these textual elements make readers meander over the page to make sense of all textual information. These cases, however, were hardly expressions of the compilers' aesthetic predilection for spiral letters. They ended up damaging the original letters by cutting them up. The ubiquity of spiral letters could have suggested this particular textual form as the template for dealing with the incongruous sizes of original letters and album pages.

The third factor that makes the consideration of aesthetics less likely is the letter writers' choice of calligraphic style. As much as male literati's masterful calligraphy signified their industrious body control for moral perfection,⁵⁰ female writers' skillful hands in vernacular script fulfilled their

bodily discipline as virtuous women.⁵¹ Many vernacular Korean spiral letters were written in “scowling” style (*hyobinch’e*), which developed as Korean writers crudely imitated the cursive styles in literary Chinese calligraphy (see figure 2.7). Although some texts written skillfully in this style might look beautiful and elegant to our modern eyes, it was geared more toward fast and efficient writing than heightening aesthetic value.⁵² The style was generally considered disorderly, disgraceful, and messy; letters written in it were difficult to decipher.⁵³ The desire for speedy writing overrode the opportunity to execute bodily discipline in composing letters. In reaction, eunuchs and court ladies invented the palace style (*kungch’e*) for elegant vernacular Korean calligraphy. By the late nineteenth century, palace style had become the favorite calligraphic choice.⁵⁴ Although palace-style calligraphy originated from the notion of the ugliness of scowling style, many correspondents continued to write their spiral letters in this style even in the nineteenth century. This testifies that letter writers did not associate spiral forms with calligraphic elegance.

Ch’ömch’al, *Together Read!*

Given that letters were widely read by Confucian literati in communal and public settings and that there was no technology to replicate texts, spiral movement may also have made the group reading of a single sheet easier and more efficient. Spiral letters divided into four parts heading in four different directions could be read in serial order by a group of readers surrounding the given text and rotating it. The readers may also have moved themselves around the text when their group was too big, just as spectators at modern art galleries and museums shift to view an artwork simultaneously. The earliest full-fledged literary Chinese spiral letter that I discovered was written during the Japanese invasion in the late sixteenth century (figure 2.9). It was sent by a court minister to the army chief recruiter on the frontline in 1592. This letter discusses concern about the delay of the Chinese rescue army, which would not enter Korea at the border. The urgency of the matter might have required the writer to apply spiral effects to let officers around the chief recruiter join in reading by surrounding the given text. Spiral letters may also have been used for the opposite reason: to control readership more effectively than could be done by reading texts aloud or posting them in public. Reading aloud was probably the most common method of sharing texts in many premodern societies.⁵⁵ It was effective in disseminating

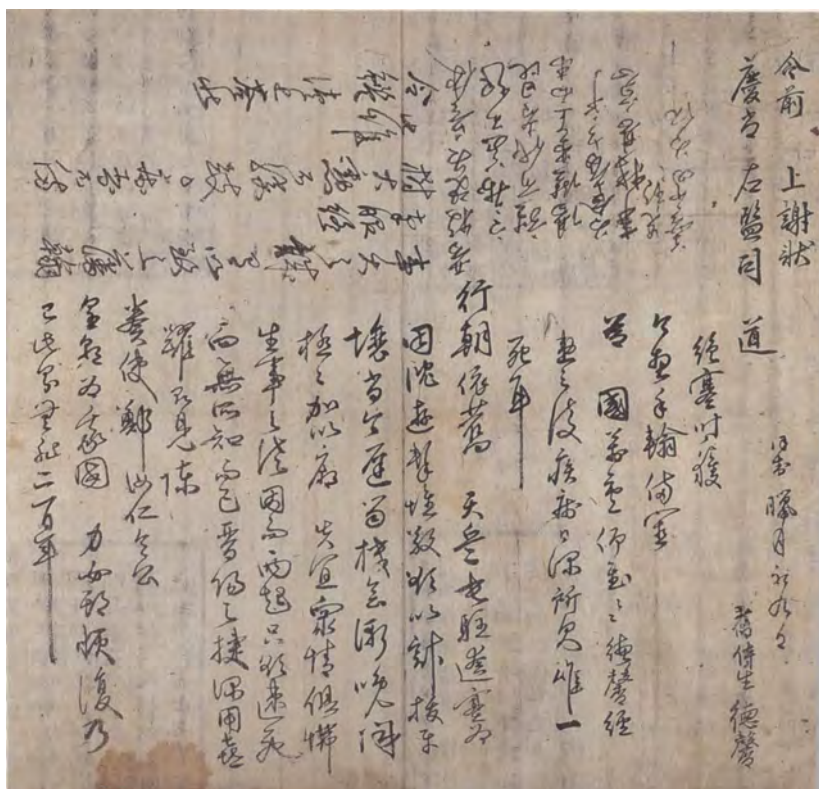


FIGURE 2.9. Spiral letter sent by Yi Tökhŏng (1561–1613) to Kim Söngil (1538–1593) in 1592 during the Imjin War. Image from Kukhak Chinhŭng Yöngu Saöp Ch’ujin Wiwönhoe, ed., *Andong Kümgye Üisong Kim-ssi Hakpong (Kim Söngil) chongt’aek p’yön*, 191. Photo courtesy of Mr. Kim Chongsöng.

information but not suitable for dealing with sensitive issues to be shared only among a small number of people. Spiral letters could have been the ideal alternative for confidential small-group communication.

Examining board games popular during the Chosön period helps us to reconstruct the social practices involving a group of people sharing a non-linear text. The oldest existing example goes back to about 350 years ago, and the earliest record of board games appeared in *Stories Collected by Söng Hyön [1439–1504] (Yongjae ch’onghwa)*.⁵⁶ The games were as diverse as the Diagram of Promotion in Official Positions (Sönggyöngdo), Diagram of Achieving Buddhahood (Söngbulto), and Diagram of Scenic Spots

(Sŭngnamdo). These games for both entertainment and didactic purposes bear textual layouts heading in four directions, just like spiral letters (figure 2.10). People had to sit around the board to play, similar to the way readers had to surround spiral letters in order to share them.⁵⁷ Epistolary practices seem to have hybridized with other forms of social interactions involving various textual components.

Figure 2.11 shows Kim Hongdo's painting produced in the late eighteenth century. Art historians titled it *Appreciation of a Painting*.⁵⁸ However, the paper held by a group of men who surround it is blank. These men could be appreciating a painting, as the art historians suggest. However, they could also be examining a blank sheet of paper for future use or reading a text together, as I propose in the usage of spiral letters. Because Kim never included text in his paintings when books appeared in them, we can assume that he could have also omitted the text in this image.⁵⁹ It was common across premodern East Asia that a group of people shared both calligraphies (texts) and paintings (images) while surrounding them. Whatever this paper really was for, the painting shows that there was a perception in the Chosŏn that a group of people would surround a single sheet of paper for their shared project.

More substantially, *ch'ŏmch'al*, which literally means "together, read," a frequently used epistolary expression since the late sixteenth century, suggests the group reading of a single letter.⁶⁰ Another notable expression is *kaksŏ*, which means "writing letters separately to each addressee." In most cases, this expression was used in negative statements, such as "*mang mi kaksŏ*" or "*pyŏng mi kaksŏ*," which respectively mean "too busy to write letters to each addressee" and "could not write letters to each addressee due to sickness."⁶¹ These phrases suggest that one letter was addressed to a group of people and read jointly. There also appears an expression, *ch'ŏmsŏ*, that means the joint authorship of letters. Both reading and writing letters developed into communal practices in the late Chosŏn period, which also could have affected the physical forms of texts.

Communal reading is observed in other societies, where it has completely different social and cultural implications from the Chosŏn case. For instance, several children sat around and shared a single Hebrew primer in medieval Jewish communities in Arabia and Egypt, where writing facilities were scarce and there were not enough books to meet the demand. While sharing one book, four or more Jewish children easily learned to read it sideways, upside down, and from all possible corners. Thus they became capable

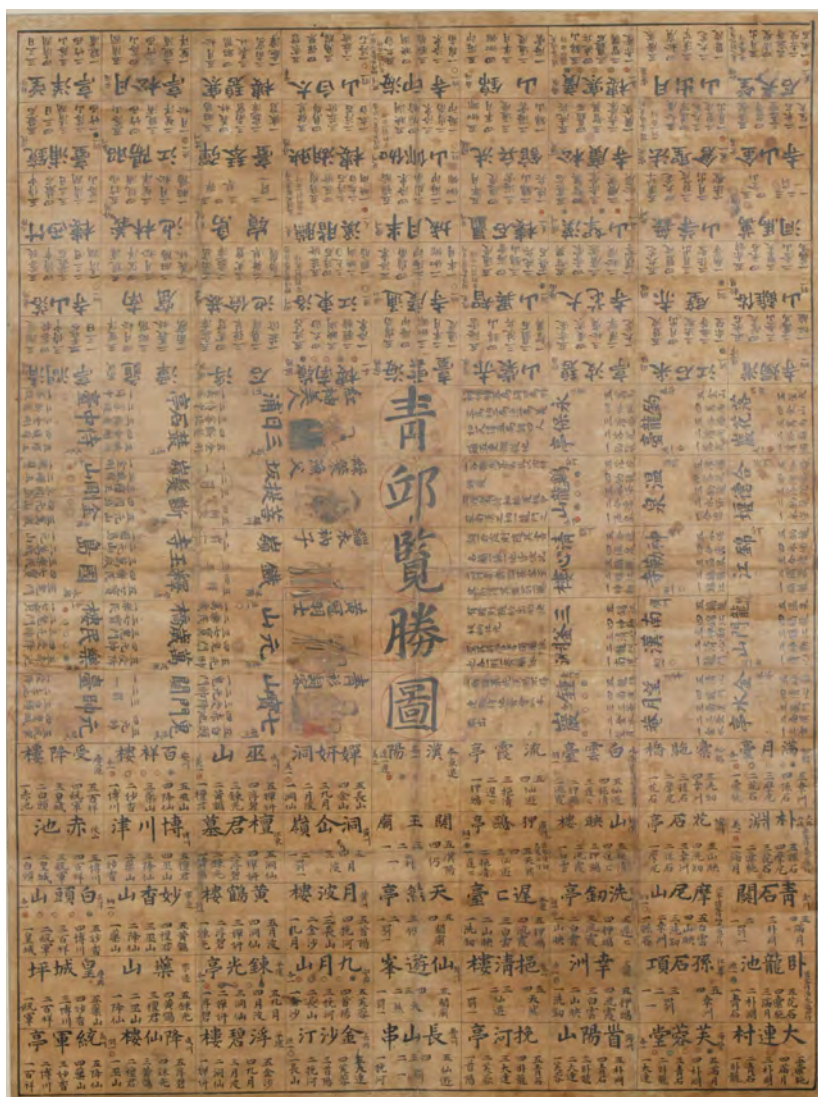


FIGURE 2.10. *Ch'onggu namsungdo*. Image from National Folk Museum of Korea (민속 minsok 030061). 105×141 cm. Photo courtesy of the National Folk Museum of Korea.



FIGURE 2.11. Kim Hongdo's (1745–?) *Appreciation of a Painting* (Kürim kamsang) in *The Album of Kim Hongdo's Genre Paintings* (Tanwön p'ungsok toch'öp). 23.9 × 28.1 cm. Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Korea.

of reading a text turned upside down with the same fluency as a text right side up.⁶² However, spiral forms do not appear in Hebrew texts of this region. Similar reading practices did not necessarily entail analogous physical forms of texts in different reading environments.

Considering the contents of spiral letters and the circumstances in which most were exchanged, the possibility of communal reading is rather slim.

Nevertheless, we cannot simply rule it out, given that we do not have any definite explanation about the usage of spiral letters. As Freeman Dyson convincingly claimed to show how scientific breakthroughs have emerged from seemingly impossible ideas, “Absence of evidence is not the same thing as evidence of absence.”⁶³

Epistolary Vogue

Spiral letters could also have been a popular epistolary style during the late Chosŏn period. After full-fledged spiral letters in vernacular Korean began to appear in the late fifteenth century, spiral forms frequently appeared regardless of both the gender of letter writers and the choice of linguistic modes (figures 2.12 and 2.13). Although some writers did not apply spiral forms, those who did generally applied more radical effects than infrequent users. Yun Tonggyu was such a case. As a pupil of Yi Ik (1681–1763), a leading Namin scholar of the early eighteenth century, Yun in his remaining letters exchanged with his teacher and colleagues mostly addressed academic issues, discussing Neo-Confucian metaphysics. He was a habitual user of spiral forms, and his letters exhibit several traits. First, as seen in figure 2.13, he tended to leave a wider upper margin, which made his letters evenly divided upon the horizontal axis. As the amount of content in the upper margin increased, each section created through spiral effects had equal significance in terms of the amount of information it carried. Second, blank spaces clearly demarcate each textual part. This unmistakable sectioning made it easier for readers to map out the spiral movement. Yun in some cases enclosed accompanying papers (*pyŏlchi*), mostly in the form of academic treatises, in which he delved more deeply into the philosophical issues brought up in the main letters. Remarkably, he never used spiral effects in these attachments. His propensity to apply extreme spiral effects to his letters never carried over to his formal writings, which attests that spiral forms were a vernacular textual style popular only in letter writing.

Chosŏn letter writers’ sensitivity to the spatial layout of texts gave rise to another unique letter form. By the nineteenth century, “boomerang letters” were being used among male letter writers.⁶⁴ To compose a boomerang letter, the writer began by indenting to the middle of the page and then left generous spacing between lines (figure 2.14, 1–9). Reaching the end of the page, he returned to the beginning and continued to write in between existing lines while radically indenting them from the top of the page (figure 2.14, 10–22).

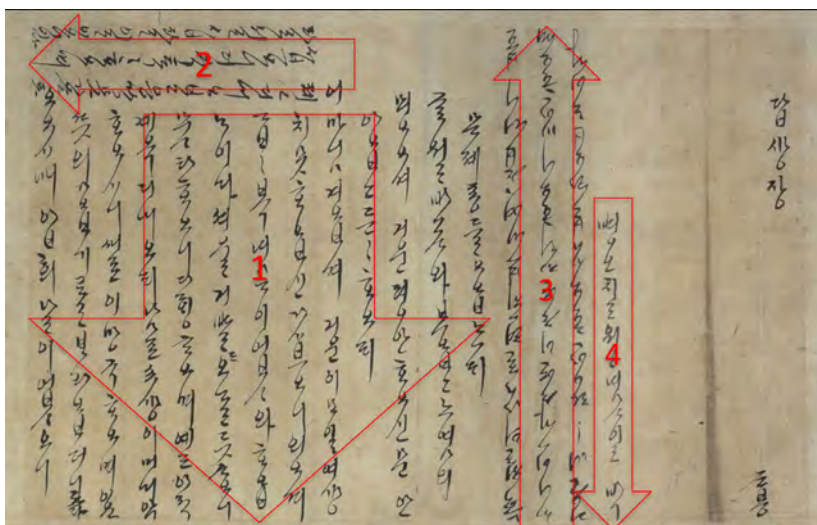


FIGURE 2.12. Madam Pak's (1700–1737) letter to her mother written in 1726. 35 × 25.8 cm. Image from Kukhak Chinhŭng Yŏn'gu Saŏp Ch'ujin Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Hoedŏk Ūnjin Song-ssi Tongch'undang Song Chun'gil Huson'ga p'yŏn* I, 36. Arrows added by the author. Photo courtesy of Daejeon Municipal Museum.

Figure 2.15 shows a more complicated mechanism of writing and reading. The writer, in this case, applied the boomerang process one more time, which made the letter-reading practice like cracking a secret code.

When both spiral and boomerang effects appear on the same page, the writing and reading practices become even more complex (figure 2.16). In all the cases that I have found so far, the spiral effect takes priority over the boomerang effect, as seen in this letter. Intriguingly, this particular letter was written by proxy (*ch'ŏn*sa), and we do not have any clue whether it was the sender's decision or the proxy writer's improvisation to apply spiral and boomerang effects. The letter writers expected addressees to follow this textual layout by common sense, without any instructions. The Chosŏn letter writers could have found it amusing to add complexity to their letters, making them visually cryptic and intellectually challenging to read.

The persistent appearance of crossed letters in the late nineteenth-century Anglophone world also corroborates the entertainment theory (figure 2.6). Although this particular form was started to save textual space, English letter writers continued to use it even after the Penny Black took effect in 1840.

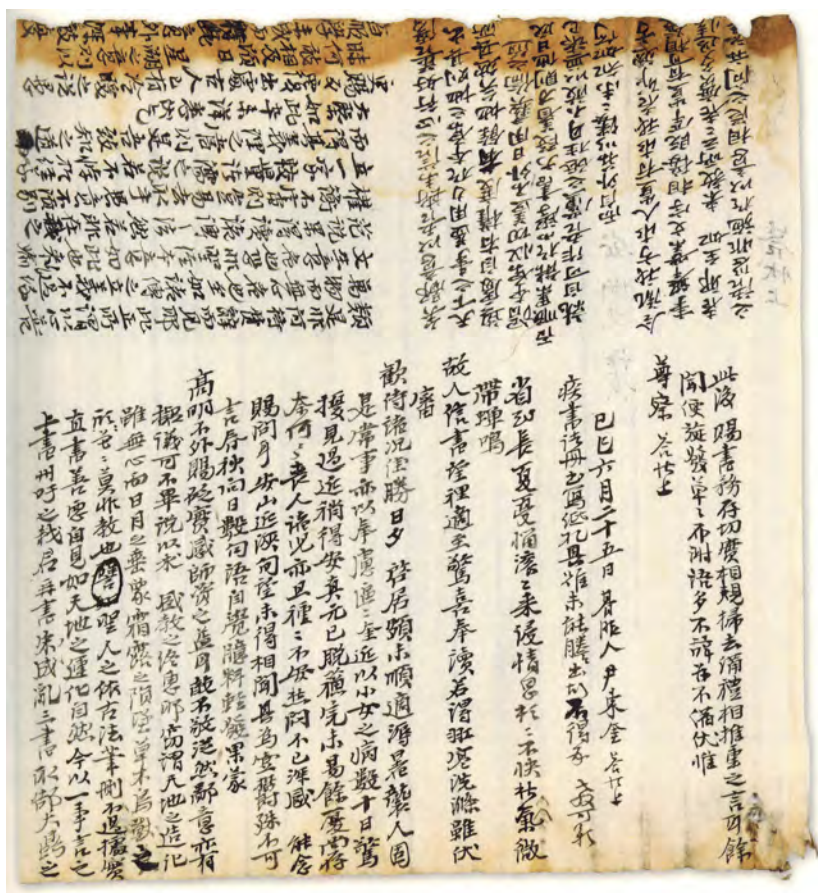


FIGURE 2.13. Yun Tonggyu's (1695–1773) spiral letter to An Chŏngbok (1712–1791) written in 1749. 30.5 × 33 cm. Han'gukhak Chungang Yŏn'guwŏn Changsŏgak, ed., *Sonam Yun Tonggyu sŏgan*, 226–27. Photo courtesy of the Jangseogak Archives at the Academy of Korean Studies (entrusted by P'ap'yŏng Yun-ssi Sonam Yun Tonggyu chongga).

The crossed letters produced after 1840 therefore had nothing to do with the intention to save postage. Here, it is helpful to examine how Jane Austen commented on crossed letters in her novels. In *Emma*, for example, Austen describes how Miss Bates admired the exquisiteness of crossed letters that she received from her niece, Jane Fairfax.⁶⁵ Writing a perfect crossed letter without messing up the page took skill, which made the exchange of letters

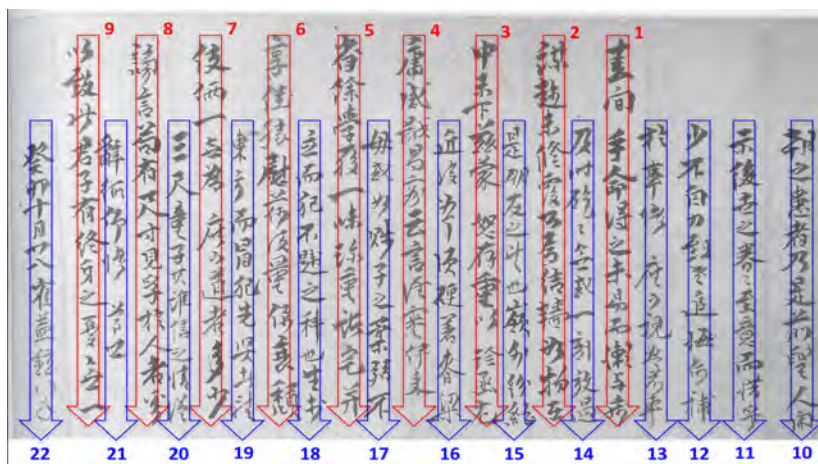


FIGURE 2.14. Ch'oe Ikhyŏn's (1833–1906) boomerang letter written in 1903. Image from Han'guk Koganch'al Yŏn'guhoe, ed., *Chosŏn Sidae Kanch'alch'ŏp Moŭm*, 236–37. Arrows added by the author. Photo courtesy of Taunsaem.

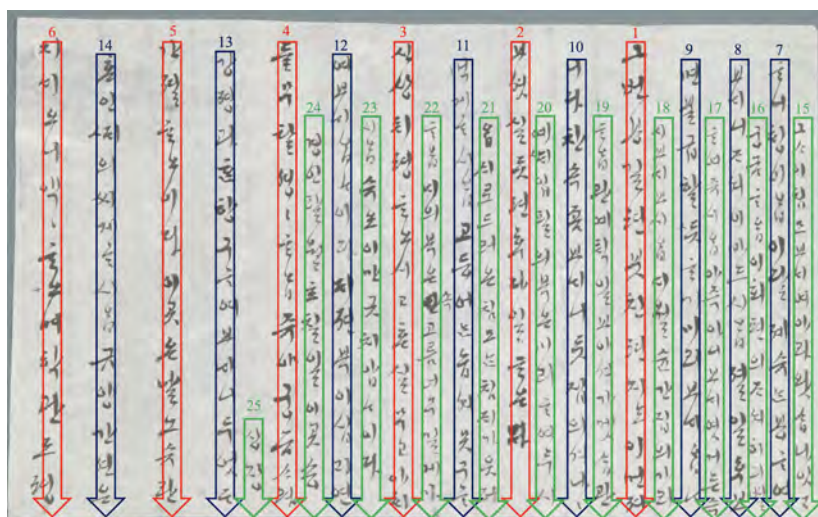


FIGURE 2.15. Song Pyŏngp'il's (1854–1903) letter to his wife (1890). Image from the National Folk Museum of Korea (민속 minsok 032082). 42 × 26.5 cm. Arrows added by the author. Photo courtesy of the National Folk Museum of Korea.



FIGURE 2.16. Yu Hujō's (1798–1876) letter written in 1871. 46.5×32 cm. Image from Kukhak Chinhŭng Yŏn'gu Saŏp Ch'ujin Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Andong Kosŏng Yi-ssi Imch'ŏnggak p'yŏn*, 166. Arrows added by the author. Photo courtesy of the Jangseogak Archives at the Academy of Korean Studies (entrusted by Andong Pŏphŭng Kosŏng Yi-ssi chongga Imch'ŏnggak).

more enjoyable. Thus, some nostalgic letter writers lamented when this particular form went out of fashion.⁶⁶

The perception that reading texts in unconventional ways is fun still holds true in the present digital age. Several websites and smartphone apps allow users to flip texts upside down or reverse word order in their cell phone text messages or social media postings. One such website states, “flip your text vertically, giving your friends a tough time reading what you typed. . . . Surprise your friends with Funny text.”⁶⁷ In a similar vein, we may well assume that Chosŏn letter writers could have elaborated on spiral forms and boomerang effects for the purpose of maximizing the amusement of writing and reading letters.

Considering that there were no letter-writing manuals explaining how to draft or decipher spiral letters, their users seem to have trained themselves not through a systematic learning process but through their exposure to and embodiment of spiral forms in everyday social interactions. The users of spiral letters thus could have established and reinforced a cohesive and close

relationship. They were bound as members of the same textual community, not only by the shared contents but by the preference for particular textual layouts.⁶⁸

THE POLITICS OF READING: COMPLEXITY IN KOREAN TEXTUAL CULTURE

Each of the four possibilities presented above by no means represents the sole definitive motivation for Chosŏn letter writers to produce spiral letters. Different letter writers might have had disparate reasons for employing spiral forms. Even the same letter writers could have had different purposes in using the same form on different occasions. As a new “textual technology,” spiral letters did not simply “fill” a predetermined social purpose. Their roles were cocreated with the forms themselves by their makers and users.⁶⁹ More importantly, the functions of spiral letters were not static but could change over time.

In my opinion, the development of spiral letters demonstrates how the users of the Korean alphabet endeavored to embrace preexisting cultural norms in their epistolary practices. Since the invention of vernacular Korean script in the mid-fifteenth century, male elites had disdained it as the “vulgar script” (*ŏnmun*), using only literary Chinese in official and public settings. The ease for all social actors, regardless of their gender, social status, and generation, in learning and mastering vernacular Korean script threatened elite domination, which hinged upon the classical tradition of literary Chinese. Thus male elites, most famously Ch’oe Malli (? –1445), discounted the effortless attainment of vernacular Korean literacy as vile and claimed that it would prevent people from delving into Neo-Confucian scholarship through “straining one’s mind and laboring one’s thought (*kosim nosa*)”; consequently, ignorance of “the sage’s script,” meaning literary Chinese, would wipe out the moral effects of Confucian education.⁷⁰ This argument echoes the reason some Confucian literati objected to translating classical Chinese texts into vernacular Korean. A legitimate way to train scholars to become ideal Confucians demanded that they willingly endure intellectual burdens to acquire knowledge. Until the end of the nineteenth century, literary Chinese remained the official written language for government records and Confucian scholarship in spite of the availability of the easy Korean alphabet.⁷¹

Women letter writers seem to have embraced this dominant discourse embedded in Confucian tradition; they might have appropriated a peculiar

textual technology to make their writings appear more sophisticated and complex visually, whatever the contents: spiral letters. The elevated visual and spatial complexity heightened the intellectual challenge for both letter writers and recipients. This dovetailed with the contemporary written culture prizing strenuous learning of difficult Confucian texts.⁷² Because male elites communicated with their female family members via vernacular Korean letters, they were exposed to these more complex writings. They ended up employing the form in their letters written in literary Chinese. Spiral forms thus prevailed as a popular trend of self-fashioning.

The development of full-fledged spiral forms in vernacular Korean letters exchanged in domestic settings offers an intriguing parallel with the rise of the “feminine hand” (*J. onnade*) Kana script in medieval Japan. The widely accepted historiography demonstrates that Japanese aristocratic women who were excluded from training in Chinese writing helped create and popularize this expedient phonetic script, which sparked the rise of vernacular literature in women’s everyday activities. However, as some studies have claimed, Kana was not a phonetic liberation through a new writing system but a choice between complicated and simplified calligraphic styles.⁷³ No evidence confirms that using Kana should be perceived as feminine in Heian Japan. Therefore, there is danger in understanding Kana as an indication of the autonomy or dominance of “female/feminine culture.”⁷⁴ Likewise, use of the spiral form neither was limited exclusively to women’s letter writing nor meant that Chosŏn women had attained cultural and textual autonomy. The complexity and sophistication embedded in this form were derived from the existing intellectual values that male Confucians advocated. Nevertheless, women’s letter writing had crucial impact on Chosŏn written culture, because many male elites imported this new “spatial genre” into their literary Chinese letters for their own purposes. Spiral letters are an important example of how letter writers co-opted day-to-day communicative practices to interact and negotiate with preexisting cultural norms and the already established power structure.

SPIRAL FORMS AS A VERNACULAR TEXTUAL STYLE

Male elites were drawn to the organizing principle of spiral letters performing complexity; however, they might have balked at its origin in female hands in domestic correspondence. The playful layouts of texts could not match the seriousness of writings that they produced in the public domain

for official purposes. However, this does not necessarily mean that spiral letters developed as isolated cases only in domestic epistolary interactions. Male elites did deliberate on academic issues or crucial political problems in their spiral letters. For instance, An Chŏngbok, an eighteenth-century polymath, elaborated on the Confucian method of reading in his spiral letter sent to Chŏng Hyŏktong (d.u.). An guided Chŏng's study by explicating how the reading of Confucian classics and poems could be interconnected in terms of the genres' shared pursuit of understanding the relation between human nature and sentiments.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, a spiral letter that Yi Tansang (1628–1669) sent to his fellow Sŏin scholars, ruminated on the Yŏngnam scholars' joint memorial in order to refute their argument on state ritual issues (see figure 6.1).⁷⁶

Comparison of these manuscript letters with the same letters included in the published writing collections of An and Yi demonstrates that spiral forms did not enter the realm of formal writings through the printing and publication processes. Without exception, all letters in the writing collections of Chosŏn literati take linear form, vertical columns proceeding from right to left, even if the original manuscript letters were in nonlinear forms.⁷⁷ The spiral letters written by An and Yi were no exception. When they were shifted from manuscripts to print, the spiral effects were straightened up and interspersed lines were rearranged in reading order (see figure 6.1). In theory, however, it was not impossible to retain the spiral forms when using woodblock printing. One of the advantages of woodblock printing was preserving the calligraphic styles of original manuscripts by employing the same techniques used in carving images.⁷⁸ The peculiar spatial layout of spiral letters was not deemed legitimate enough to be included in printed books.

Having letters published also meant that the compilers inspected and edited the contents to make them acceptable for public readership. An's letter was actually included in his writing collection, as it was in manuscript form.⁷⁹ However, Yi's letter went through a thorough editing process. The contents of the printed version were not only substantially truncated but also purposefully paraphrased by the editor.⁸⁰ Presumably the editor of An's writing collection considered the style and tone of An's original letter already good enough to be circulated among readers other than the addressee. The case of Yi's letter, however, shows that the original was not suitable for publication in the editor's eyes.

Thus, spiral forms were truly a vernacular textual style. How they were undone and rearranged is analogous to the ways other vernacular elements

such as *idu* and *kugyŏl* were removed from the initial drafts of literary Chinese texts written by male elites when they were put into print.⁸¹ Letters bearing spiral forms remained in the domain of the vernacular; thus, the male letter writers might have used them to indicate that their missives were not yet ready for circulation through printing and publication. Male elites' letters that we now read in printed versions could be radically different from their original manuscripts in both content and textual layout.

EFFORTLESSNESS AS A NEW TEXTUAL NORM

The undeniable influences of colonialism and the encroachment of Western capitalism, however, triggered the decreasing popularity of nonlinear texts in Korea. Spiral letters were scarcely used after the 1890s, when the introduction of modern newspapers printed with Western technology brought in a new written culture.⁸² As Western Protestant missionaries began to enter Korea, they immediately made the dissemination of the Bible translated into vernacular Korean the key evangelical apparatus. Led by American Methodist Mary F. B. Scranton in 1888, Protestant missionaries mobilized the so-called Bible Women, who were referred to as *kwŏnsŏ puin* (a woman who recommends books [the Bible]) in Korean. These Korean women, who sold gospel tracts and Christian materials, made it their mission to teach many illiterate women they encountered to read vernacular Korean.⁸³

Transgressing the traditional social values and Confucian patriarchy, the Protestant Bible Women were instrumental in spreading Western written culture to Korean readers. Protestant missionaries applied two significant elements of Western writing to their publications in vernacular Korean script: horizontal reading and word spacing.⁸⁴ Under the predominant influence of literary Chinese written culture, no punctuation had appeared in vernacular Korean texts before this period. Pre-twentieth-century readers of literary Chinese texts mainly relied on either the context or the parallel structure of sentences,⁸⁵ which also affected the shape of vernacular Korean texts. Although writers and readers were familiar with blank spaces left in front of terms referring to political dignitaries and their behaviors or possessions, which functioned as reverence marks (*p'yŏnggwŏl*), the idea of word spacing had been unheard of.⁸⁶ While horizontal reading was confined to Korean primers for foreigners (figure 2.17),⁸⁷ word spacing prevailed more widely, along with ideas of social equality and popular sovereignty. An American missionary, Homer B. Hulbert (1863–1949), initially suggested

applying word spacing to Korean in 1896.⁸⁸ He pointed out that without word spacing, the same sentence could generate several different meanings. The first vernacular Korean newspaper, the *Independent* (Tongnip sinmun), published in the same year, shared this new idea (figure 2.18). The editorial in the first issue made clear that the paper was using vernacular Korean to reach a wide readership regardless of gender, status, and class. Echoing Hulbert's disquisition, it stated that the continuous passages without any break in existing vernacular Korean texts made it difficult to tell whether a certain character formed a word with the preceding character or the following one. Thus, people had to read the same text several times to determine its meaning. Despite the ease of learning vernacular Korean script, the editors opined, reading a letter written in vernacular Korean usually took more time than reading one written in literary Chinese.⁸⁹ Effortless reading with word spacing, which subsequently facilitated silent and solitary reading, was essential for the enlightenment movement of this period.⁹⁰

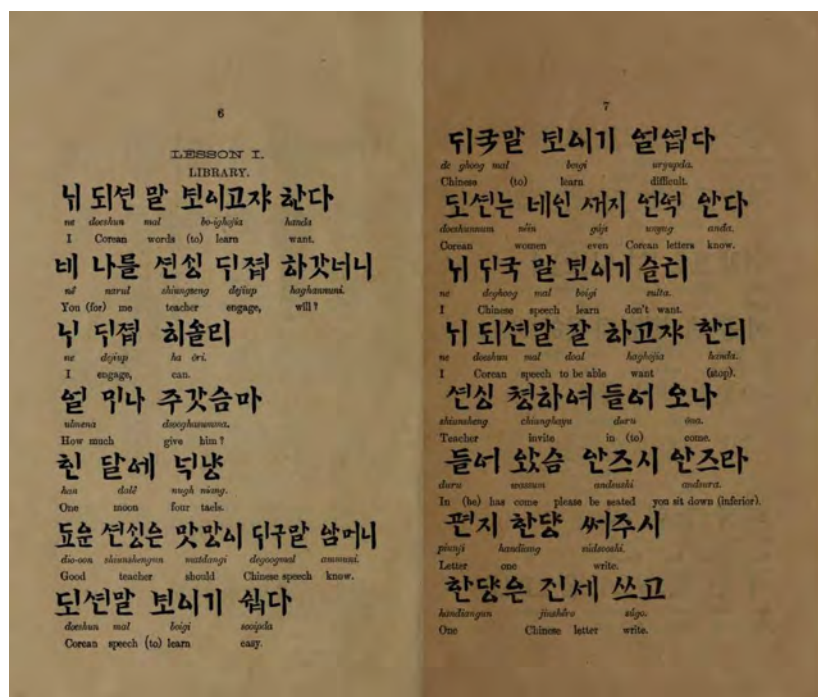


FIGURE 2.17. Ross, *Corean Primer*, 6–7. C. V. Starr East Asian Library, UC Berkeley (5973.07.7099).

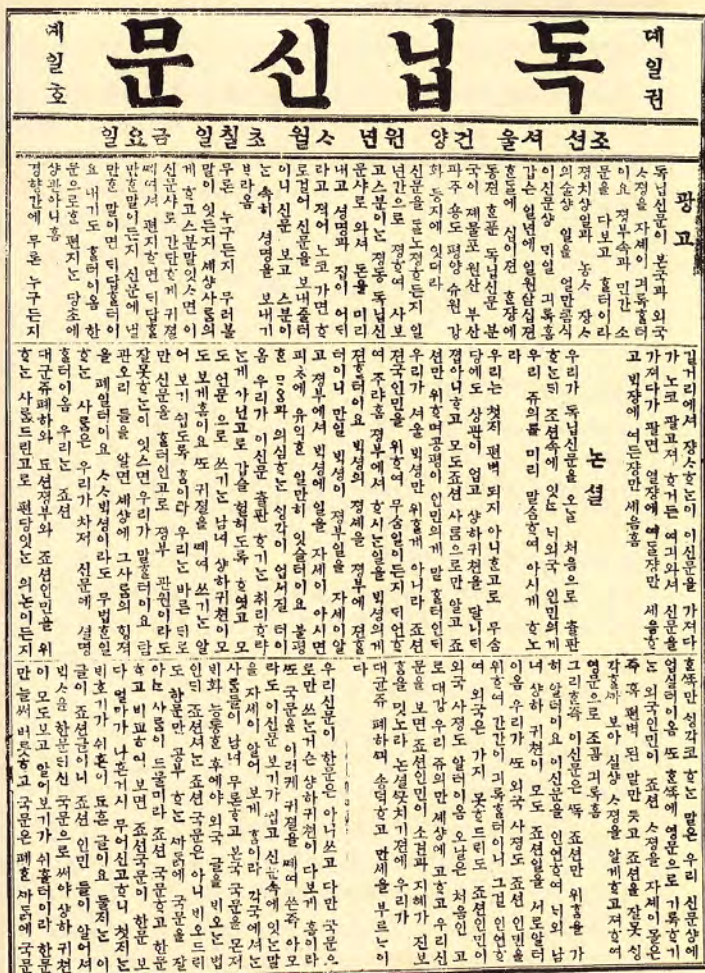


FIGURE 2.18. The Independent, April 7, 1896.

The combination of new social thought, the mass production of newspapers, and the introduction of word spacing created a general readership. Newspapers in pure vernacular Korean script with word spacing facilitated effortless reading, which subsequently promoted the spread of political information, thereby promoting social equality. This contrasted with spiral letters, which added complexity to texts to emulate the literary Chinese

written culture associated with Confucianism. The disappearance of spiral letters coincided with the fall of old Confucian values and the rise of readable vernacular Korean newspapers that advocated new Western values aiming to level social stratification and Confucian patriarchy.⁹¹

The rise and fall of spiral letters as a spatial genre reveal how the experiments in physical shapes of letters were closely related to cultural power in this period. The social, cultural, and political realities of Chosŏn Korea engendered a unique notion about the spatial layout and meanings of texts. Remarkably, spiral letters' increasing popularity happened simultaneously with some male Confucian elites' attempts to redefine their relationship to the broader Confucian civilization by embracing letters as academic texts. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Letters in the Korean Neo-Confucian Tradition

ALTHOUGH male elites had been familiar with letter writing for both social interactions among themselves and their public duties as government officials, it was only after the invention of the Korean alphabet that their daily life became saturated with epistolary practices. The act of writing and reading letters pervaded every aspect of human interactions, not only because it was mundane and ubiquitous but also because it was not coerced but subtly inserted into daily life.¹ The exponential increase in the number of letters produced and exchanged in elite households prompted the writers to try something unconventional with their letters beyond their basic function as a communicative tool. Just as women letter writers experimented with various textual layouts in composing their messages, male elites used epistolary practices to improve their position in the Chosŏn society. From the sixteenth century, they began to blend epistolary practices with Confucian scholarship. Sensitivity to epistolary contexts and the relationship between letters and writing in other genres figured prominently in Confucian scholarship from this period on. Letter writing also facilitated networking among scholars on both local and national levels. The new mode of scholarship and networking centered on epistolary practices gave rise to a new sense of scholarly community in late Chosŏn Korea.

CONFUCIAN TRADITION IN KOREA

Both as a political tool and as a cultural value, Confucianism had profound impacts on Korean society over a very long period. Korea's initial exposure to Confucianism was in the second century BCE, when Han dynasty China set up four commanderies in northern Korea and Manchuria. The Han colonizers employed the Confucian administration system inscribed in literary Chinese to rule their Korean subjects; Koreans learned and emulated this system to transform their tribal federations into centralized states. The ruling elites also began to use literary Chinese not only for record keeping in governance but also for communication among themselves and with Chinese officials. This situation fundamentally contributed to the symbolic power of Confucianism because the Confucian classics were what the elites studied to master this foreign writing system. The subsequently established Three Kingdoms, however, showed only limited influences from Confucian culture, mostly in the political sector. Instead, Buddhism, to which the Three Kingdoms converted from the fourth to sixth centuries, governed the lives of people across society. This syncretic tendency continued during the Koryŏ dynasty, when Buddhism, compounded with some indigenous belief systems, wielded substantial sociopolitical authority beyond its religious clout. However, Confucianism in Koryŏ had developed into a more sophisticated political ideology. The dynastic founder, Wang Kŏn (877–943), elevated his political authority not by claiming divine birth, as ancient Korean rulers had done, but with the Mandate of Heaven (Ch'ŏnmyŏng) derived from the Confucian classical tradition: the ruler earned or lost the Mandate depending on whether or not his own moral virtue accorded with the will of Heaven. Moreover, the governmental system was modeled after that of Tang China; the state began to recruit officials through the civil service examination system from 958. While emulating the Tang notion of the ideal man, Korean elites in this period cultivated and refined their tastes in literary arts and sensitivity to aesthetics. Despite a setback during military rule from 1170 to 1258, Confucianism continued to permeate Koryŏ society as the effective means of statecraft and set of exemplary cultural values. Remarkably, Neo-Confucianism was introduced into Korea during the Mongol domination of Koryŏ from 1258 to 1356. Easy access to the Yuan capital, Beijing, and increased interactions with Chinese intellectuals allowed Korean scholars to learn about their metaphysical inquiries into human nature and its relationship to cosmological order. In the mid-fourteenth century, when the

Mongols withdrew from East Asia, the elites steeped in this new scholarship called for the total transformation of Korea into a Confucian normative society matching their moral vision. This group allied with a powerful general, Yi Sönggye (1335–1408), to topple the Koryŏ and establish a new dynasty: the Chosŏn.²

Although Confucianism itself was not new to early Chosŏn elites, the political configuration used to implement the Confucian lifestyle as a social order was unprecedented. This new social program was not necessarily congruous with many Korean indigenous customs, which undergirded the strong and persistent sociopolitical influence of aristocratic pedigrees. The hereditary aristocracy had maintained an incredibly durable and prolonged social domination in Korean history since the Silla period, irrespective of the intermittent dynastic changes.³ The majority of elite families of the early Chosŏn period had carried over their political domination from the Koryŏ dynasty.⁴ This led to contention and substantial compromise between the Confucian norms and the indigenous customs. For instance, the egalitarian meritocracy that the Confucian political apparatuses instilled was toned down, and emphasis was placed on hierarchy in the Confucian social order, to accommodate the interests of aristocrats. The effect was an “aristocratic bureaucracy.”⁵ Similarly, the equal emphasis given to bilateral pedigrees in the Korean aristocracy made it difficult to carry out patrilineal social restructuring at once, as the Confucian ritual classics ordained. The compromise family structure of the late Chosŏn period thus preserved the traces and remnants of uxori-local marriage customs. To instill the Confucian way of life, the Chosŏn state had to implement forceful legal measures and elaborate ritual programs from the beginning of the dynasty. The Confucianization of Korean society was an arduous and deliberate intellectual and social process that took more than two centuries.⁶

This laborious process required Korean scholars to acquire broad and profound understanding of Neo-Confucian theories. Thus they badly needed the most up-to-date scholarship and books from Ming dynasty (1368–1644) China. The discordant diplomatic relationship with the Ming, however, disrupted academic transmission during the early Chosŏn period.⁷ Since the Ming dynasty was established in 1368, the first emperor, Hongwu, had openly displayed his distrust toward Korea mostly due to its close political, cultural, and ethnic ties with the Mongols, who continued to pose a security threat on the Chinese northern border.⁸ Although Hongwu endorsed the new Korean dynasty by conferring the title of Chosŏn, his suspicion had

never fully dissipated.⁹ The first serious contention between the Ming and the Chosŏn dynasties took place in 1395 due to a breach of protocol in a Chosŏn diplomatic document presented to Hongwu. Because he considered the diplomatic protocols used in it insolent, he detained the envoys and ordered the Chosŏn court to arrest Chŏng Tojŏn, who had drafted the document.¹⁰ Although this conflict was resolved through the literary talent of Kwŏn Kŭn (1352–1409),¹¹ the Ming suspicion of the Chosŏn was not completely dispelled by the end of Hongwu's reign and beyond.¹²

As a suzerain of the Chinese tributary system, the Ming had an obligation to disseminate Confucian civilization to other tributary states to illuminate their morals in the right ways.¹³ Diplomatic friction, however, made the Ming court reluctant to share its cultural and academic resources with Korea. In 1433, for instance, King Sejong asked the Ming emperor to allow Chosŏn students to study in Ming state schools. The Ming emperor did not permit this and instead granted the Chosŏn court some basic Confucian classics, including the Five Classics, Four Books, and *The Great Compendium of Nature and Principle* (Ch. Xingli daquan).¹⁴ This was in stark contrast to the Ming court's accommodation of the Ryūkyū scholars studying in China in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁵ Moreover, although the Ming court granted some books to Chosŏn, it was wary of sharing the most up-to-date scholarship. One *sillok* record in 1433, for instance, states that it forbade foreign envoys to bring any books and medical items back to their home country without its permission.¹⁶

The assignments for the Chosŏn envoys dispatched to Beijing in 1435 to celebrate the Ming emperor's birthday vividly show how desperate the Chosŏn court was to collect Chinese books, despite this restriction:

1. *The Great Compendium of Four Books* and *The Great Compendium of Five Classics* edited during the reign of King T'aejong (r. 1400–1418) are already outdated. When these books were published in China, we in Chosŏn did not know of their existence. We have received books from the Ming emperor several times. . . . However, there is no single book that illuminates the erudite details of Confucian principle. The Ming court must have published books expounding these details, which have not been transmitted to our country. Please ask the Chinese officials about new books and try to buy them. . . .
2. The study of Confucian principles is manifested in *The Great Compendium of Four Books*, *The Great Compendium of Five Classics*, and *The*

Great Compendium of Nature and Principle. The study of history, however, has been based on past scholarly works. Therefore the writings of recent scholars are generally better than those of their predecessors. So the helpful books [recently published in China] should be brought to our country. . . . When you buy books, make sure to buy two copies of the same title just in case one is lost. . . .

3. Please ask the officials in the Ming court if it is possible to print, with woodblocks, a complete set of Confucian classics available in Beijing, if we provide our own paper and ink.
4. The envoys who returned from the Ming last time delivered the news that *The Great Compendium of Emperor Yongle* (Yongle daquan) could not be published immediately due to its copious number of volumes. So please find out if these volumes have been published and what their contents are. . . .
5. . . . Find out if it is possible to bring Chinese type castings to our country.¹⁷

Collecting contemporary Chinese scholarship through buying or inquiring about new books held vital significance for envoy missions.¹⁸ This was the only access to Chinese scholarship.

The isolation from contemporary Ming scholarship led Korean scholars to the immensely painstaking task of understanding the complexities of Confucian literature on their own. Chosŏn scholars delved into Song Neo-Confucian literature, and this taxing process made their interpretations of Neo-Confucianism distinct from that of contemporary China.¹⁹ By the sixteenth century, Chosŏn Neo-Confucianism traced its provenance directly to Song China.²⁰

HOW T'OEGBYE READ ZHU XI'S (1130–1200) LETTERS

Given this situation, it is no surprise that T'oegye and Yulgok, the two prominent masters of the sixteenth century, are generally regarded as the most significant figures who shaped the Confucian tradition of Korea. T'oegye's academic agenda, in particular, reflects this precarious condition in which scholars attempted to make the Song Neo-Confucian tradition comprehensible and more accessible. The emphasis on the inheritance of Song academic tradition led Chosŏn scholars to choose a radical lifestyle prescribed in

Neo-Confucian texts. Starting in the sixteenth century, embodying Confucian learning in everyday life was widely popular among the literati. T'oegye initiated the local academy movement in rural areas in the 1540s. Academy education encouraged scholars to devote themselves to the Confucian way of life through serious scholarship and elaborate ritual practices. In addition to offering this social setting to facilitate the Neo-Confucian lifestyle, T'oegye also paid significant attention to finding the best writing genre for making complex Neo-Confucian discourse accessible to beginning scholars. T'oegye obtained a copy of *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings* (Chuja chönso) in this period.²¹ In the course of reading it, he realized that scholarly texts written in discrete genres generated completely different scholarly and pedagogical effects. In particular, he found the letters included there useful for teaching purposes. The scholarly content in the letters was embedded in very specific contexts of everyday life, which perfectly echoed Chosön scholars' efforts to carry out Neo-Confucian moral principles in their daily practices. In other words, the senders and receivers of letters activated academic issues in epistolary space due to the specific contexts of their correspondence.

T'oegye meticulously edited, annotated, and anthologized Zhu Xi's letters, which are included in *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings*. He completed his anthology in 1556, titled it *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* (Chujasö chöryo), and praised its effectiveness as the threshold to Neo-Confucian scholarship.²² In the preface, written in 1558, T'oegye explains how he came to read Zhu Xi's writings and why he chose to edit and anthologize his letters:

The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings had barely been circulated in our country. In 1543, King Chungjong [r. 1506–1544] ordered the Office of Editorial Review (Kyosögwān) to publish this collection. Thus, I came to know of its existence and acquired this collection. . . . [T]he words in it have flavor, and the meanings in it are infinite. In particular, I have learned more in reading letters [than in reading other parts]. As for the whole content of this collection, it is hard to get its gist because it is as broad as the earth [in terms of quantity] and as deep as the sea [in terms of meanings]. As to letters, however, [Zhu Xi] made different explanations to different people according to their innate personal qualities and degrees of scholarship. This is similar to applying different medicines to different symptoms and measuring various things in a scale.²³

T'oegye nurtured a keen sense of the different effects of disparate genres while reading various pieces included in the collection. In particular, the reciprocity between the sender and the addressee embedded in the genre of letters caught his attention as a way to facilitate readers' understanding of complex Neo-Confucian theories. The author's estimation of the intellectual abilities of different recipients generated a variety of narratives on the same scholarly issues, which was not possible in other writing genres. T'oegye emphasizes the advantages of letters for studying Neo-Confucianism by comparing them with other genres:

Someone said: "How can [reading] classics written by sages and texts written by the virtuous scholars not be substantial learning? Also, all commentaries [on Neo-Confucian classics annotated by Zhu Xi] are characterized by sincere learning. In that case, why are you prone to read [Zhu Xi's] letters only? How can your learning be so prejudiced and parochial?" I answered: "Your questions sound plausible, but they are not right. In general, people can progress in their scholarship only when they find the very key to learning and when they are encouraged by it. There are numerous talented scholars who make their best efforts to [memorize and] recite Zhu Xi's discourse. However, there is no one who fully gets across his learning, and this results from failing to discover the very clue. The words in these letters reflect how teachers and students discussed and illuminated the pith of learning and how they encouraged each other. So letters are different from other writings, which discuss scholarly issues in dry tones. There is no letter that does not discover people's minds and hearts and encourage them [to work hard on Neo-Confucian scholarship]."²⁴

Whereas the questioner underscored the significance of the authors' intentions in discussing the contents of texts, T'oegye suggests that readers focus on learning in different ways by reading writings in different genres. T'oegye's reading of Zhu Xi's letters led him to notice that the choice of genre could generate entirely different reading effects from the same content. In other words, T'oegye considered that the mode of writing governs the meaning of texts. This new approach drew on T'oegye's own experience of Zhu Xi's works as a reader. With his anthology of Zhu's letters, he stood within and for the audience he addressed, just as this anthology functioned as a representative synecdoche for the whole collection of Zhu's writings. T'oegye, as the anthologist, exemplified the reading public rather than

instructing or shepherding his readers from the vantage point of an advanced scholar.²⁵

This quotation also reveals that T'oegye paid special attention to the specific contexts in which the given correspondences took place. Zhu Xi's versatile narratives as a letter writer to his disciples cum addressees invigorated scholarly discourses that could easily have fallen into "dry tones." This capture of scholarly practices in everyday contexts enriched the pedagogical effects of reading letters because readers could envision how Neo-Confucian concepts had been originally created and developed in the interactions between the master and disciples. Moreover, the deliberation on everyday practices discussed in Zhu Xi's letters invested the daily life of letter readers themselves with increased significance, as they realized that learning was embodied in their seemingly trivial conversations and behaviors. The original contexts of correspondence thus maintained an ineluctable relationship with readers' daily practices, which subsequently affected their modes of reading and writing letters.

Here I find the debate on the contextualist approach in modern intellectual history useful to illuminate T'oegye's notion about epistolary contexts. Some problematized the contextualist approach as a method in the history of ideas because it ends up subscribing to the circular argument that the social contexts affect the meaning of texts, and in turn, the texts affect the formation of the social contexts. Instead, historians have to consider the contexts as the scope of meanings of the texts in the given societies rather than giving totalizing power to social contexts in historical studies.²⁶ If we borrow this critique, T'oegye seems to have fallen into the fallacy of treating contexts as absolute determinants of textual meaning instead of regarding them as a framework for deciding "conventionally recognizable meanings" in the given society.²⁷ In his understanding, the conservation of original contexts distinguished Zhu Xi's letters from his academic writings in other genres. However, some point out that philosophers of certain periods put forward their ideas not simply to their contemporaries but also for audiences in the future.²⁸ The authorial intentions could transcend the contextual constraints at the moment of writing. Although Zhu Xi's letters were originally sent to specific addressees, they appealed to Chosŏn scholars because scrutinizing the letters allowed them to master Song Neo-Confucian theories without consulting contemporary Chinese scholars. They were "readdressed" to Chosŏn readers through the process of anthologization and publication as books.²⁹ Korean scholars were drawn to Zhu Xi's letters several centuries later for both their

capacity to reenact original contexts and their applicability in explicating the sociopolitical situation of the Chosŏn. T'oegye's emphasis on specific contexts in Zhu Xi's letters embodied the intention of Chosŏn scholars, catering to the epistemological desire to acknowledge the provenance of new ideas as well as the practical need to establish a new self-identity with this academic agenda.

Through success in this academic endeavor, Chosŏn scholars could play down their isolation from and even claim superiority to contemporary Ming intellectuals. The confidence that they better understood Zhu Xi's scholarship, moreover, led them to criticize Ming scholarly culture's deviations from Song Neo-Confucianism. T'oegye, for instance, criticized the prevalence of Wang Yangming's (1472–1528) and Chen Xianzhang's (1428–1500) scholarship, which emphasized the spontaneity of human intuition instead of rigorous learning and serious reflection. He summarized their view as a pseudo-Confucianism masked by the study of Chan Buddhism.³⁰ Denouncing this academic contamination enabled Korean scholars to consider themselves the authentic inheritors of orthodox Neo-Confucianism. T'oegye thus attempted to create an academic genealogy that directly connected Korean scholarly culture to Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian tradition. He wrote *The Comprehensive Record of the Study of Principle* (Ihak t'ongnok), an edited collection of brief biographies of Zhu Xi school scholars in the Song, Yuan, and Ming periods.³¹ In his narrative, Song Neo-Confucian learning did not necessarily represent Chinese virtues but comprised common cultural and intellectual values shared by all those under the influence of literary Chinese classical tradition. For T'oegye, the best understanding of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism was to be accomplished in Chosŏn Korea. To achieve this daunting task, scholars should master his letters as the major scholarly texts.

ANTHOLOGIZING LETTERS FOR PUBLICATION

Besides underscoring the merit of letters in learning Neo-Confucian scholarship, T'oegye pointed out that the sheer number of letters included in *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings* does not allow scholars to easily master them. He supposed that readers might get fed up with the copious volumes of this collection, as they could not finish studying it within one or two years. The typical methods for managing abundant texts from antiquity to the present day involve selecting, sorting, and storing by social actors in diverse combinations for various purposes with multiple

technologies.³² T'oegye also focused on condensing and cutting the letters to a manageable size. He suggested that scholars read his anthology first and then study the whole collection, depending on their own abilities.³³ In the book culture of early modern Europe, anthologies and abridgments function as significant means to help ideas "trickle down." These truncated versions made lengthy and complex texts accessible for wider readerships, including the less educated and economically disadvantaged.³⁴ T'oegye's anthology, in a similar vein, enabled even beginning students to easily experience Zhu Xi's scholarship.

T'oegye further claimed that some questions and answers between Zhu Xi and his disciples offered less inspiration than others. For this reason, he excluded letters that he considered improper for his anthology. This selection process excluded about 700 letters out of around 1,700, which originally amount to forty-eight fascicles.³⁵ In some cases, he selected parts from several different letters that discuss the same issues, then combined them into a single text in order to form a coherent narrative.³⁶ He also cut out the contents of selected letters that did not support his editorial intention. The readers of this anthology were intended to read what T'oegye had included and not to read what he had excluded.³⁷ Most of the deleted parts are introductory and ending passages inquiring after the addressee's health or letting the addressee know how the sender is getting along.³⁸ Removing these epistolary formalities stripped the letters of epistolarity, which confirmed and reinforced the reciprocal intimacy and mutual longing between correspondents.³⁹ Although T'oegye emphasized the contextual specificities as the key pedagogical advantage of letters, his editing process, intended to fit letters into books, removed them. Ironically, third-party readers could access the correspondence more comfortably when the epistolary contexts were neutralized to accommodate their different reading conditions.

T'oegye followed the structure of *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings* by categorizing letters according to different addressees rather than rearranging them according to topics or chronological order. He also added explanatory notes at the beginning of each anthology volume about people who appeared in it. Moreover, he made notes at the beginning or end of each letter regarding its content. T'oegye also interposed his annotations on terms and events between the lines of the original letters. In principle, they answer potential readers' questions without interrogating either author or reader.⁴⁰ T'oegye's annotations at the beginning of each volume and notes at the beginning and end of each letter, however, made him the only source

of knowledge about the text for readers.⁴¹ These invasive annotations and the extensive editing evoked concern about the distortion of textual meanings even among his close collaborators.

T'oegye also punctuated Zhu Xi's letters. This process could result in readers interpreting the letters differently because the meaning of the same text in classical Chinese, which originally did not bear punctuation marks, could differ depending on how readers added them. In a letter to Yu Söngnyong (1542–1607) in 1566 upon the republication of this book in Chöngju by Yu's father, Yu Chungnyöng (1515–1573), T'oegye explained that he punctuated Zhu Xi's letters to better elucidate their meanings. He thought that his punctuation would be of help in deciphering ambiguous and difficult parts.⁴² By annotating and punctuating Zhu Xi's letters rather than simply anthologizing them, T'oegye himself stood out in this anthology. His paratextual voice occupied "the threshold of interpretation,"⁴³ and readers could arrive at the original texts only through it.

However, T'oegye seems to have been anxious about his voice standing out in the paratextual space. For him, the annotations should testify to his intellectual inheritance of Zhu Xi's tradition rather than indicating his distance from it. In his letter to Hwang Chunnyang (1517–1563) written in 1561, he asked Hwang to write an epilogue for this anthology to clarify his editorial stance as well as to share editorial responsibilities.⁴⁴ However, this emphasis on the seamless connection with Zhu Xi was not compatible with what T'oegye put forward as the advantage of Zhu Xi's letters. T'oegye's effort to reenact the original contexts by reading letters, after all, evinced the temporal and discursive distance from Zhu Xi's period. Whether intentionally or not, T'oegye's usage of paratextual elements further dictated the readers' interpretation by setting the purpose of reading this anthology as only mastering Neo-Confucian principles.

FORMS AND MEANINGS OF TEXTS

T'oegye could read Zhu Xi's letters as scholarly texts in part because the letters were in book form. T'oegye located them in *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings* rather than identifying them in their original separate format for communication. The letters had already been decontextualized from the original contexts of their production and recontextualized to fit into this collection of diverse writings. The readers' role was also amplified because it took cooperation between compilers and readers to constitute

the consistent meaning of a collection containing various writings. Thus, we have to take into account the intertextuality of various writings in different genres in order to unravel T'oegye's interpretation of the letters. The process of compiling different texts as components of a collection silenced conflicting authorial intentions imposed upon each text in favor of the coherence of the whole because the name of the author predominates over the peculiarities of different genres and disparate contexts. Therefore, the editorial intention of *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings* affected how T'oegye read Zhu Xi's letters.

T'oegye's reading strategy reflected the sociocultural implications that book reading had delivered in the Chosŏn. The writing collections of Korean scholars before this period included very few letters, if any, with no systematic way of organizing this genre. In many cases, letters were included in miscellaneous writings along with works in other genres rather than in a separate section. Thus, it must have been a unique experience for T'oegye to read the letters in book form. Moreover, for early Chosŏn literati, reading books was exclusively connected to the act of learning. When T'oegye encountered Zhu Xi's letters that way, their meaning was already geared toward academic interpretation. T'oegye as a reader channeled the meanings of these texts to fit his purposes. Just as Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton show in their study of Gabriel Harvey's reading of Livy, T'oegye's scholarly reading of Zhu Xi's letters was clearly goal oriented and active rather than reactive to the contents.⁴⁵ Letters delivered completely different discursive connotations before and after being published in a book. The very same letter might be classified in different genres, depending on the material form in which it appeared. The shift of textual forms for the same content did not simply effect a physical changeover but also altered the text's semantic and functional values. Taking a book form always entailed a series of orders set up to interpret, understand, and put to use its contents.⁴⁶ Forms assuredly affect the meanings of texts rather than merely acting as different vessels conveying the same contents.⁴⁷

This new reading experience also shaped the ways Korean scholars related their letters to the books that they published. After T'oegye's compilation, the writing collections of Chosŏn scholars began to include letters both copiously and systematically.⁴⁸ When T'oegye's works were published as a collection in 1610, it included more than one thousand letters as a separate section (*sŏ*). This shows a changed perception of letters among scholars in T'oegye's circle, compared to the writing collections of earlier scholars or

their contemporaries. For instance, the writing collection of Yulgok, whose academic legacy matches that of T'oegye, includes only 139 letters in spite of the meticulous publication process by his pupils.⁴⁹ This clearly demonstrates that letters held special meaning for T'oegye school scholars.

Ironically, although T'oegye gave Zhu Xi's letters credit for their sensitivity to context depending on the diverse concerns and different abilities of various addressees, T'oegye distanced these letters even further from their original contexts while anthologizing, editing, annotating, and punctuating them. This transformation of letters into books redefined the expected readership of letter correspondence. Correspondence came to include the possibility of letters being read by third-party readers, in addition to the original addressees. This change also altered the attitude of letter writers, as they had to consider such "hidden readers."

READING LETTERS FOR SELF-CULTIVATION

The academic uses of Zhu Xi's letters also changed T'oegye's perception about the functions of his own letters. T'oegye anthologized twenty-two letters of his own written between 1555 and 1560, addressed to ten different people, into a collection titled *Record for Self-Reflection* (Chasöngnok), although the anthology was known to the world only after his death. As mentioned at the beginning of this volume, he revisited the letters he had drafted from time to time and used them as a yardstick for self-reflection.⁵⁰ He expressed concern about his forgetfulness regarding what he had stated in his letters and discrepancies between his words and behaviors.⁵¹ This is significant because self-reflection for T'oegye meant the continuous recontextualization of what he had already expressed in his letters.

The letters included in this collection mostly discuss the significance of applying scholarly principles to everyday life, the gradual achievement of Confucian scholarship, and reconciliation between holding official positions and dedicating oneself to scholarship and the meanings of Neo-Confucian concepts such as mind-and-heart (*sim*) and righteousness (*üi*). The letters' contents regarding self-reflection emphasize the embodiment of Neo-Confucian scholarship in everyday practices; likewise, these letters also should have been embedded in the very specific contexts of T'oegye's daily life. The practice of writing letters thus had two implications for T'oegye. On the one hand, senders write letters to deliver their messages to

addressees; on the other, and at the same time, they write them as memoranda addressed to themselves to regulate their own behaviors.

The dual roles of letter writers as both senders and future addressees of their own letters might have led them to preserve copies, based upon the possibility of multiple uses of the same letters for various purposes over a period of time. In other words, T'oegye took into account the noncommunicative application of letters from the start, when he wrote them for communication. This versatility of letters fostered the culture of rereading and recontextualizing them, which defies the assumption of secrecy between the sender and the addressee. Letters in the Chosŏn period, in this way, perched on the ambiguous boundary between private communication and public writing.

Although the letters included in *Record for Self-Reflection* reveal discursive integrity and topical consistency, T'oegye's selection process distorted the original contexts in which the letters were written and read, focusing on the discursive ties among unrelated letters. All the letters in this collection except one are replies to other scholars' inquiries about the methods of learning or the meanings of Neo-Confucian concepts. The exception, which is the paper appended to T'oegye's letter addressed to Ki Taesŭng (1527–1572), does not differ too much—T'oegye counseled Ki by offering a standard for deciding whether to serve in officialdom or to retreat. These letters discuss generic issues of Neo-Confucian scholarship and conduct while answering very specific questions brought up by different senders. The shared concern about Neo-Confucian scholarship and an ethical way of life enabled T'oegye to use the different letters for his own project. Reshuffling them into an anthology gave them a new textual meaning by stripping each letter of the original contexts in which it had been written and read. T'oegye's appropriation of letters diversified the social meaning of this genre beyond a communicative tool bound to specific contexts.

EPISTOLARY DEBATES IN CHOSŎN SCHOLARLY CULTURE

Besides reading letters for scholarly purposes, Chosŏn scholars used them to carry on long-distance discussions, which would not have been possible otherwise. Such exchanges of letters for academic discussions were not unique only to the Chosŏn period. Seneca's moral letters to Lucilius (*Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*), for example, allow us to observe the most thrilling

philosophical interactions in Roman history.⁵² The letters Wang Yangming exchanged with various Ming literati also figured prominently in the formation of his version of Confucian interpretations.⁵³ Among many similar cases in Korea,⁵⁴ the epistolary debate between T'oegye and Ki Taesŭng is the best known and helps us better understand the uses of letters in scholarly interactions. This epistolary debate holds significance not only because nationwide Confucians drawn into it thus formed a single interpretive community but also because two competing interpretations of the given topic bifurcated the academic schools that subsequently shaped the political topography of late Chosŏn Korea. The emphasis on the embodiment of Confucian learning in daily practices encouraged scholars to delve into the relationship between human nature (*sŏng*) and human emotions and/or sentiments (*chŏng*), which jointly form mind-and-heart (*sim*). Chosŏn scholars mostly agreed that human sentiments are enacted from human nature; however, they diverged in explaining the relationship between the Four Beginnings (*sadan*) and Seven Chŏng (*ch'ilchŏng*), which respectively appear in *The Works of Mencius* and *The Book of Rites*.⁵⁵ This very issue triggered heated debates between T'oegye and Ki in a series of eight letters exchanged between 1559 and 1566, known as the Four-Seven Debate. Both T'oegye and Ki understood that all *chŏng* originated from human nature. According to this logic, both the Four Beginnings and the Seven Chŏng belong to the grand rubric of *chŏng*, and they embrace both principles (*i*) and material forces (*ki*). Based upon this understanding, Ki claimed that the Four Beginnings and the Seven Chŏng cannot be separated, and the former refers to the appropriate sentiments among the latter. However, T'oegye argued that whereas the Four Beginnings could only be signified by principle, which would make the expression of *chŏng* always appropriate, the Seven Chŏng could be only signified by material force, which would make the expression of *chŏng* appropriate or inappropriate depending on the circumstances. In other words, he made the Four Beginnings an absolute moral standard for self-cultivation.

Besides the importance of the subject matter as an urgent philosophical inquiry of the period, how this debate actually developed exhibits the changed perceptions of letter writing among Korean literati. Remarkably, both T'oegye and Ki considered their correspondence not as exclusive private communication but as an open forum in which scholarly communities surrounding them would join and add input. Both collaborated with other scholars to hone their arguments by sharing their mutual correspondence.

Ki openly circulated the letters and asked the opinions of prominent scholars from the early stages of the debate; Kim Inhu (1510–1560), Yi Hang (1499–1576), and No Susin (1515–1590) responded, which enriched Ki's argument. T'oegye also discussed this issue with some of his pupils.⁵⁶ In this way, Confucian scholars came to appreciate public readership and collective authorship through exchanging letters.⁵⁷ Therefore, it was no surprise that Yulgok and Sŏng Hon (1535–1598) initiated the second round of this debate in 1572 in response to the exchange between T'oegye and Ki. The secrecy assumed between senders and addressees in their correspondence easily gave way to open access to letters in the quest for better scholarship.⁵⁸ To some degree, the letters exchanged among the Confucian literati functioned as academic periodicals, which did not exist in the Chosŏn academic environment.⁵⁹ This helped Confucians establish the tradition of free scholarly debate between master and disciple, or between senior and junior scholar.⁶⁰

At the conclusion of this debate, the scholarly community demanded the letters for academic purposes. Ki's son, Ki Hyojŭng (d.u.), published the letters exchanged between T'oegye and Ki separately as early as 1614.⁶¹ However, as we can see from the second-round epistolary debate on the same subject between Yulgok and Sŏng Hon in 1572, the transcribed manuscripts must have been circulated among nationwide literati almost instantaneously after the original debate. Just as T'oegye's attention to Zhu Xi's letters elevated letters as a legitimate academic genre, the philosophical contents distinguished the letters exchanged between T'oegye and Ki from other ordinary letters conveying mundane information.

ZHU XI'S LETTERS AFTER T'OEGYE

Nowhere is it mentioned to what extent T'oegye's anthology of Zhu Xi's letters was distributed in the Chosŏn scholarly scene. Because there is no evidence that books were commercially produced in sixteenth-century Chosŏn, we cannot assume that it was disseminated through markets. Considering that T'oegye lectured on this book several times to his disciples after its completion in 1556, however, it is certain that scholars under his tutelage read it extensively. Although Hwang Chunyang had initially published the anthology in 1561 in Sŏngju, publication continued in Haeju and P'yŏngyang up to 1567. Yu Chungnyŏng republished it in 1567 when he was the magistrate of Chŏngju in northern Korea. The version published in 1575 at Ch'ŏn'gok Academy was the first to include T'oegye's preface, which was

TABLE 3.1. The publication history of *The Abbreviated Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters* in the late Chosŏn period

Year	Location	Publisher	Printing medium
1561	Sŏngju	Hwang Chunnyang	Movable type
1561–67	Haeju	Yu Chungnyŏng	Movable type
1561–67	P'yŏngyang	Unknown	Movable type
1567	Chŏngju	Yu Chungnyŏng	Woodblock
1575	Ch'ŏn'gok Academy	Unknown	Woodblock
1611	Kŭmsan	Chŏng Kyŏngse	Woodblock
1743	Tosan Academy	Unknown	Woodblock
1904	Tosan Academy	Unknown	Woodblock

only discovered after his death. Starting with this version, the title of the anthology was also changed from *The Abbreviated Essence of Hoeam's Letters* (Hoeamsŏ chŏryo) to *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters*. Until the early twentieth century, this work was published eight times in total; it was further transmitted to Japan and has been published four times there since 1656.⁶²

As T'oegye elevated Zhu Xi's letters to major Confucian texts by highlighting their academic and pedagogical significance, scholars under his influence closely read the letters in their Confucian studies. For instance, Yi Tŏkhong (1541–1596) recorded that “the master [T'oegye] guided his students to read in the sequence of *Elementary Learning*, *Great Learning*, *The Classic of Mind and Heart*, *Analects of Confucius*, *The Works of Mencius*, *Zhu Xi's Letters*, and other classics.”⁶³ T'oegye claimed that beginning scholars should read Zhu Xi's letters, as these writings would immediately inspire them to implement Confucian principles in their daily interactions.⁶⁴ Kim Sŏngil, in a similar vein, pointed out that T'oegye consulted this anthology whenever he received difficult questions from scholars.⁶⁵ Zhu Xi's letters offered actual examples of how Confucian theories were put to use. These accounts by T'oegye's disciples show that he made use of the letters to apply abstract Confucian principles to everyday human interactions. For this reason, the anthology of Zhu Xi's letters developed into both major textbooks and references among scholars under T'oegye's influence.⁶⁶

This emphasis on Zhu Xi's letters also spread to some scholars who were not under T'oegye's direct tutelage. Kim Uong (1540–1603), who studied

with Cho Sik (1501–1572), was well known for perusing T'oegye's anthology.⁶⁷ When the king asked Kim what books he had been reading recently, he mentioned *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* along with *Reflections on Things at Hand* (Künsarok).⁶⁸ Sŏng Hon, who led the academic discourse of the Sŏin faction, which competed with the Namin faction of T'oegye school scholars, openly encouraged his followers to carefully read T'oegye's anthology. He asserted that this collection discussed all obstacles that scholars might encounter and would provide solutions for them. Thus, if they closely read and deeply savored the letters included in it, scholars would have no reason to seek out any other teachers or friends to answer their questions.⁶⁹ Chŏng Ch'öl (1536–1593), another leading Sŏin figure, also stated that T'oegye's anthology illuminates the fundamental core of Zhu Xi's writing collection.⁷⁰ T'oegye's focus on letters certainly influenced the ways Korean scholars approached Neo-Confucianism, regardless of their political orientation.

Besides its pedagogical and scholarly functions, this letter anthology as material object delivered symbolic meaning in defining the academic heritage of the T'oegye school. The records about Pak Kwangjŏn (1526–1597), for instance, highlight that he received a copy of *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* from T'oegye when he visited Tosan in 1566.⁷¹ Pak, who was from Chŏlla, was not generally regarded as one of the major disciples of T'oegye, most of whom were from nearby areas and served him for a long period. However, this powerful story of the inheritance of material texts legitimated his membership in the group despite his brief meeting with the master. Considering that this anthology was printed in 1561 and other print runs ensued, the copy that Pak received could have been a printed version, which we cannot confirm now. T'oegye had persistently and meticulously redacted different printed versions of his anthology since the first version was brought into the world.⁷² Irrespective of the printing medium, it is very likely that this version included T'oegye's handwritten annotations and comments, which could have brought special meaning in defining Pak's academic status. In any event, following T'oegye's advice, Pak seriously scrutinized this letter anthology, asking T'oegye through correspondence about what he did not understand.⁷³ He compiled these questions and answers into a book, which many scholars later copied to refer to, although it is not extant.⁷⁴ The author of Pak's record of conduct (*haengjang*), An Pangjun (1573–1654), narrated this story about the inheritance of T'oegye's anthology and subsequent scholarly activities as the pivotal event establishing Pak as a notable scholar.

Yi Chŏn's (1558–1648) inheritance of this letter anthology resembles Pak's story, but in this case the transmission extended over three generations. In describing the scholarship of Yi Chŏn, Yi Sangjŏng (1710–1781) placed the story of material inheritance at the center, just as An Pangjun did for Pak Kwangjŏn. He argued that T'oegye emphasized Zhu Xi's letters as the standard of the Confucian Way and Yu Sŏngnyong succeeded by learning from them. Yi Chŏn and his younger brother, Yi Chun (1560–1635), continued this legacy by studying under Yu. Notably, Yi Chŏn received a set of *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* from Yu. He delved into this specific work for the rest of his life and compiled a book titled *The Collected Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters* (Hoeamsŏ ch'waryo), which categorizes the letters according to major Confucian concepts, although this text does not survive.⁷⁵ The reception of this letter anthology from the master and the ensuing scrutiny of it laid the groundwork for eulogizing Yi's scholarship and its significance in the tradition of the T'oegye school. The material transmission of this anthology from master to disciple symbolized that the recipient inherited the orthodox Neo-Confucian tradition, which originated from Zhu Xi.

The fact that *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* was published eight times in total until the end of the dynasty illustrates its academic weight in the Chosŏn scholarly culture.⁷⁶ Considering that the main means of textual transmission in pre-twentieth-century Korea was transcription, manuscript copies of this anthology might have been more widely disseminated than the number of print runs would suggest. Although it seems true that many scholars welcomed this anthology, it also became the site of academic contention where Namin and Sŏin scholars expressed their different views about Neo-Confucian scholarship from the seventeenth century onward. Most T'oegye school scholars continued to adhere to letters as the prime writing genre for delving into Zhu Xi's theories while producing commentaries to and annotations on this anthology. Sŏin scholars, however, began to point out the incompleteness of T'oegye's choice of only letters from various genres. They attempted to distinguish themselves by broadly embracing Zhu Xi's writings in other genres.

The earliest existing annotations on T'oegye's anthology are *The Record of Questions on "The Abbreviated Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters"* (Chusŏ chŏryo kiŭi) and *The Record of Lectures on "The Abbreviated Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters"* (Chusŏ chŏryo kangnok). These include neither prefaces nor postscripts; thus, it is difficult to determine their authorship and publication processes. Whereas *The Record of Questions* annotates only T'oegye's

anthology, *The Record of Lectures* includes comparative analysis with different versions of *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings* published in both China and Korea, in addition to annotations. Most remarkably, *The Record of Questions* includes fifteen chapters, akin to the original manuscript of T'oegye's anthology with fourteen chapters, whereas *The Record of Lectures* has twenty chapters, just like the versions printed after 1567.⁷⁷ Although the bibliographical information about these two annotated volumes remains obscure and does not show how they were actually circulated and used, it is certain that the different editorial policies affected how late Chosŏn scholars approached Zhu Xi's version of Neo-Confucianism.⁷⁸ Interestingly, T'oegye school scholars referred to *The Record of Lectures* as the authentic disciples' record of the master's teaching, whereas the Sŏin scholars claimed that *The Record of Questions* was T'oegye's own commentary on his anthology. Focusing on this particular work, Sŏin scholars problematized its incompleteness and T'oegye's partiality to letters. This actually led Song Siyŏl to expand the annotations to all Zhu Xi's writings, which developed into *The Record of Questions about "The Great Compendium of Master Zhu Xi's Writings"* (Chuja taejŏn ch'aŭi).

Although criticism of T'oegye's choice of letters prevailed among Sŏin scholars, the first attempt to anthologize Zhu Xi's other writings was initiated by Chŏng Kyŏngse (1563–1633), who had studied under Yu Sŏngnyong. Like T'oegye, he thought that the vast quantity of Zhu Xi's writings did not allow scholars to closely scrutinize them. However, because T'oegye's anthology focused only on letters, Chŏng stated, he anthologized some other works into eight chapters to complement it. He completed this work in 1622 and titled it *The Deliberation on Selected Writings of Zhu Xi* (Chumun chakhae).⁷⁹ This anthology mostly focused on Zhu Xi's political writings, such as memorials presented to the emperor and commentaries on political institutions, although it also included some miscellaneous writings such as postscripts to other scholars' works. Focusing on correcting typos, however, Chŏng did not put forth his views about the content of Zhu Xi's writings. He attached neither a preface nor postscript, which would have provided information about how he decided to compile the collection. Song Chun'gil (1606–1672), in his postscript to this work put together by his father-in-law, claimed that Chŏng intended to reveal the true meanings of Zhu Xi's writings for themselves rather than through his annotations.⁸⁰

Even if Chŏng intended to weaken the criticism of T'oegye's anthology by complementing it with some other writings, his effort exposed another

limitation by focusing solely on political genres. Instead of discrediting these anthologies outright, Song Siyöl took it as his responsibility to combine them, which he did in a volume titled *The Comprehensive Compilation of “The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi’s Letters” and “The Deliberation on Selected Writings of Zhu Xi”* (Chölchak t’ongp’yön). Initially, he aimed to annotate Chöng’s anthology. However, he expanded his project by compiling Zhu Xi’s other writings, those not included in these two anthologies. He titled it *The Comprehensive Compilation with Supplementation of Omissions* (Chölchak t’ongp’yön poyu). In this process, he ended up annotating all of Zhu Xi’s writings included in his collection. These comprehensive annotations were finally published as *The Record of Questions on “The Great Compendium of Master Zhu Xi’s Writings.”*⁸¹ In his preface written in 1689, Song lamented that T’oegye’s annotations on Zhu Xi’s writings are partial, whereas Chöng’s anthology has no annotations. Here, Song concluded that *The Record of Questions on “The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi’s Letters”* was T’oegye’s own annotations on his anthology.⁸² Song did not conceal his dissatisfaction with the annotations, using such direct expressions as “could not be true” (*kongmiyön*), “[the argument] might be [supported] only [by] him” (*kongsagodan*), “[the argument] might not be stable” (*kongmian*), and “[the argument] might be too far-fetched” (*kongt’aesim*).⁸³ Revealing the imperfection of T’oegye’s understanding of Zhu Xi’s scholarship, he intended to dominate the academic discourse of the period with this work. In his preface, he stated that Yulgok Yi I specialized in Zhu Xi’s scholarship, and Kim Sanghön (1570–1652) succeeded him. This tradition ran in Kim’s family; thus, Kim’s grandsons—Sujöng (1624–1701), Suhöng (1626–1690), and Suhang (1629–1689)—whom Song consulted in completing this work, established the academic authority of the period. Moreover, Song claimed that Suhang’s son, Ch’anghyöp (1651–1708), and Kwön Sangha (1641–1721), who studied under Song, carried on this scholarly tradition.⁸⁴ The compilation is attributed not simply to Song’s scholarly ambition but also to his pursuit of academic authority and prestige as the legitimate inheritor of the Neo-Confucian heritage from Zhu Xi.

Song’s backlash against T’oegye’s anthology also testifies to the changed perception of Zhu Xi’s version of Neo-Confucianism in seventeenth-century Korea. As discussed, the early Chosön scholars, including T’oegye, took it upon themselves to make sense of difficult Neo-Confucian texts. Thus, T’oegye made them both easier to understand by focusing on letters and more accessible by anthologizing them. The norm of the sixteenth century

was to make Zhu Xi's scholarship comprehensible to a wide spectrum of scholars. However, when the Korean literati deepened their knowledge, they aimed to attain comprehensive understanding rather than taking a shortcut to the essence of this scholarship. This academic change also reverberated in Korean scholars' claim that Chosŏn was the last bastion of Confucian civilization after the fall of the Ming. For literati like Song, the partial treatment of Zhu Xi's scholarship in anthologies no longer held currency. After all, T'oegye's anthology targeted novices in Zhu Xi's version of Neo-Confucianism.

Going beyond anthologizing and annotating Zhu Xi's writings from his collection, some scholars extracted Zhu Xi's writings that had been buried in the works of other scholars. A good example of such efforts is Pak Sech'ae's *The Collection of Omissions from "The Great Compendium of Master Zhu Xi's Writings"* (Chuja taejŏn sübyu). This extraordinary passion to save every piece of Zhu's work distinguished the Korean Neo-Confucian tradition from that of contemporary China, which could legitimize Korea as the inheritor of Song Confucian tradition. By the eighteenth century, the general format of Zhu Xi's writing collection in Korea embraced Pak's work, thus explicitly differing from the version circulated in China.⁸⁵

However, T'oegye's emphasis on letters as the most effective genre for Neo-Confucian studies died hard. Some adherents to this idea attempted to crystallize T'oegye's anthology even further. Cho Ik (1579–1655) had grappled with this work for about three decades, and he anthologized it again as *The Categorized Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters* (Chusŏ yoryu). This volume includes only about 60 percent of the letters originally contained in T'oegye's version. In the preface written in 1642, Cho claimed that although T'oegye contributed to posterity with his anthology of Zhu Xi's letters, even that book is not easy to master because the letters are still copious. He asserted, "In general, what [you] get is precise when the speech is succinct; and it would be easier to put your efforts [into scholarship] when the writing is concise."⁸⁶ Echoing T'oegye's concern about scholars overwhelmed by too much to study, Cho stressed brevity and conciseness.⁸⁷ Here, we can see that some scholars still viewed access to Zhu Xi's complex texts as the priority, unlike the more serious approach to this scholarship as seen in the case of Song Siyŏl.

Another trend reinforcing the importance of letters in the late Chosŏn Confucian tradition was to make the annotations on T'oegye's anthology impeccable. Ever since the authenticity of these annotations emerged as an

academic issue in the seventeenth century, T'oegye's intellectual heirs had worked on revising them. In particular, Yi Chae (1657–1730), who led the T'oegye school in the Yŏngnam area, completed *The Correction and Supplement of "The Record of Lectures on 'The Abbreviated Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters'"* (Chusŏ kangnok kanbo) in the early eighteenth century. In the preface, written in 1713, Yi mentioned that the contents of *The Record of Lectures* had remained problematic because scholars published material T'oegye had not reviewed, assuming that he had. Because some records in it are not thorough enough, he continued, they do not help readers at all. Yi added that there had been several works published on the assumption that T'oegye might have written them, and *The Record of Lectures* is one of them.⁸⁸ Yi displayed extraordinary caution in dealing with information appearing in Zhu Xi's letters, so as not to repeat the mistakes that T'oegye's followers had made. Yi left what he could not verify as it was, adding a note, "transmitting questions [to posterity]" (*chŏnŭi*), without making conjectures. At the same time, he kept what he thought was erroneous in *The Record of Lectures*, adding notes such as "needs to be substantiated" (*tangsangji*) or "the record might be wrong" (*konggio*).

This effort to make T'oegye's anthology impeccable also motivated some Korean scholars to revisit the letters of Zhu Xi that had been excluded from T'oegye's work. As late as the late eighteenth century, King Chŏngjo (r. 1776–1800), who is well known for his academic zeal, selected one hundred letters from both T'oegye's anthology and Zhu Xi's writing collection and titled the compilation *One Hundred Selected Letters of Zhu Xi* (Chusŏ paeksŏn). Five hundred copies were first printed using metal moveable type in 1794; Chŏngjo ordered them distributed to state schools across the country. He also directed the provincial governors to print the work again with woodblocks to disseminate it widely.⁸⁹

The Neo-Confucian discourse of late Chosŏn scholars, irrespective of their factional affiliations, was heavily influenced by T'oegye's choice of letters as the best genre to elaborate on complex academic issues. Even Sŏin scholars, competing with T'oegye's intellectual heirs both politically and academically, had to remain sensitive to the relation between academic subjects and different written modes in order to deliver information effectively. Therefore, their criticism of and backlash against T'oegye's partiality maintained reciprocity with the Confucian discourse derived from Zhu Xi's letters, to which T'oegye connected Chosŏn scholars.

ANTHOLOGIZING T'ŌEGYE'S LETTERS AS CONFUCIAN TEXTS

T'ŏegye's intellectual offspring could continue to stress the significance of letters in part due to the academic attention to the Four-Seven Debate in the late Chosŏn period. *The Letters Exchanged between Two Masters* (Yang sŏnsaeng Wangboksŏ), edited by Ki Hyojŭng, had been circulated since 1614. The revised version was also available under the title *The Letters Exchanged between Two Masters on the Four-Seven and I-ki* (Yang sŏnsaeng Sach'il Iki Wangboksŏ), republished in the late eighteenth century. It seems certain that this topic held vital significance in the Neo-Confucian tradition of the late Chosŏn, and thus the letters continued to serve as the central academic genre. However, it was not until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that scholars wrote annotations on and analyses of the Four-Seven Debate. For instance, Chŏng Sihan (1625–1707) compiled his *Verifications and Proofs on the Four-Seven Debate* (Sach'il pyŏnjŭng), and Yi Ik authored *The New Edition of the Four-Seven Debate* (Sach'il sinp'yŏn). These two works criticize Yulgok's denial of T'ŏegye's argument on the topic. Chŏng put forth that although Ki Taesŭng realized the problems of his own argument while debating with T'ŏegye, his explanation of T'ŏegye's theory revealed that he was forced to follow it without fully comprehending it. Also, he claimed that although Yulgok beguiled posterity with his eloquent writing style, his ideas were not drawn from the Confucian classics.⁹⁰ Yi Ik also argued that Ki failed to convey his argument in writing, and Yulgok exacerbated it by claiming the rightness of Ki's argument with his harangue.⁹¹ Yi went one step further and claimed that Song Chun'gil forsook T'ŏegye to elevate Yulgok. Because the contemporary scholars did not want to get involved in academic turmoil, Yi continued, Song's interpretation of the Four-Seven Debate ended up being widely accepted.⁹²

In this situation, T'ŏegye school scholars in the seventeenth century also utilized his letters as another means to raise their academic status. They compiled T'ŏegye's letters as a separate collection modeled after his anthology of Zhu Xi's letters. The oldest existing anthology of T'ŏegye's letters is Chŏng Hon's (1602–1656) *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Yi [T'ŏegye]'s Letters* (Ijasŏ chŏryo). Chŏng's academic heritage stemmed from T'ŏegye's scholarship, as his father had learned from Chŏng Kyŏngse.⁹³ Chŏng Hon thought that an abridged anthology of T'ŏegye's letters would facilitate their

dissemination; scholars in the countryside could not easily obtain the letters but were eager to read them for their Confucian studies.⁹⁴ However, this six-volume manuscript remained unpublished for about two centuries, in part due to Chŏng Hon's reluctance to publicize it. He was concerned about potential criticism of his editing of the work of a prominent Confucian master. Hence, it does not seem that the anthology was widely circulated. Notably, Yi Sisu's (d.u.) postscript, which was probably written in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, informs readers that a similar anthology of T'oegye's letters had been produced about one hundred years earlier, though we do not have any further information about it.⁹⁵ Echoing this record, there are frequent accounts revealing scholars' demand for the anthology of T'oegye's letters in writings produced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. For instance, the record of conduct of Yi Chae reads that he intended to anthologize T'oegye's letters following T'oegye's precedent of publishing Zhu Xi's letters, but he could not complete this project.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, Kwŏn Sangil's letter to Hwang Chaesu (d.u.) reads that they were collaborating on a work titled *The Classified Collection of T'oegye's Letters* (T'oesŏ yuch'an). Here, Kwŏn suggested editing this work following the editorial policy of the *Reflections on Things at Hand*.⁹⁷ However, we do not know whether they completed this work, as it is no longer extant. Yi Ik's letter sent to Kwŏn in 1743 accounts for the collection of letters exchanged between T'oegye and his disciples, on which some scholars were working. Yi mentions that he had named this *The Scholarship of the Eastern Scholars* (Tongsa chi hak) and asks Kwŏn's opinion about this title.⁹⁸ The various attempts to anthologize T'oegye's letters suggest that they could have been circulated widely during the late Chosŏn period.

Another existing anthology of T'oegye's letters was compiled by Yi Sangjŏng and titled *The Abbreviated Essence of Master T'oegye's Letters* (T'oegye sŏnsaeng sŏ chŏryo). The basic structure of this ten-fascicle anthology is very similar to that of Chŏng Hon's work. The difference, however, rests upon the intertextuality between Yi's anthology and other textual practices of T'oegye school scholars in this period. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these scholars worked on publishing the writing collections of T'oegye's disciples, following the publication of works dealing with the master-disciple relationship, such as the compilation of disciples' narratives on the master's everyday practices and the roster of the academic school specifically pinpointing who learned from whom.⁹⁹ Yi Sangjŏng was also engaged in such projects and drafted prefaces for the writing collections

of Yi Chŏn and Kim Yung (? –1594). Therefore, Yi Sangjŏng's anthologization of T'oegye's letters was his statement about the academic lineage of the T'oegye school. T'oegye's scholarship passed down to his pupils "in the middle of their daily practices" (*iryong chi kan*), as observed in his letters, and the studies of these letters and their survival as a book warranted the continuation of T'oegye's scholarly heritage.

Reading letters was also a daily ritual for T'oegye school scholars, who tried to embody the message of letters written by Confucian masters in everyday practices. Chŏng Yagyong's (1762–1836) work shows well how a leading intellectual of the period emphasized the letters in the learning process. In the winter of 1795, Chŏng was in exile at Kŭmjŏng, and he happened to get a half set of the writing collection of T'oegye from a neighbor. He read one letter every morning and before noon recorded what he had learned and contemplated from the daily reading. When he was released from exile, he titled this *The Record for Modeling after T'oegye* (Tosan sasungnok).¹⁰⁰ In it, Chŏng discussed self-cultivation, the method of scholarship, and the propriety of serving the state. It is notable that Chŏng immersed himself in T'oegye's letters in his daily practices. Thus, this period in his life cannot be understood without considering his attachment to the letters. This case shows that T'oegye school scholars stressed the significance of embodying knowledge in daily practice not only through the contents but also through the reading mode of the genre of letters.

As T'oegye was a leading public intellectual of the time, his attention to written modes influenced the ways fellow scholars and future generations studied and interpreted Neo-Confucianism throughout the late Chosŏn period. Therefore, it is worth asking why Zhu Xi's version of Neo-Confucianism dominated Korean scholarly culture but did not prevail in the academic discourse of contemporary China, where other academic schools such as that of Wang Yangming competed with it. The answer is that while this scholarship accompanied the rise of a new written culture in Korea, there was no particular written culture supporting Zhu Xi's discourse in China. Even there, some letters were written not for communication but to fix the author's ideas in textual form, which allowed for rereading and further reference. In particular, admonitory letters were indistinguishable from nonepistolary genres such as intellectual testaments in terms of function.¹⁰¹ Letters in late imperial China functioned as the supplementary means to spread knowledge that could not be incorporated into books or essays;¹⁰² they hold no significance in the Confucian canon.¹⁰³ In the Chosŏn

epistolary culture, however, letters became the main genre for Neo-Confucian studies and self-cultivation. Unlike Korean scholars, Ming literati were affected by the mode of book production. The surge of commercial printing on various philosophical subjects in the mid-Ming period coincided with the demise of Zhu Xi's version of Neo-Confucianism and the rising popularity of the thought of Wang Yangming.¹⁰⁴ The availability of more books facilitated the spread of new approaches to Neo-Confucianism, which allowed intellectuals to challenge preexisting ideas. In both the Chosŏn and the Ming, people not only understood new ideas more easily but also put them into practice, when they were conveyed in the appropriate written mode. However ingenious and innovative certain ideas may be, they need to be presented in an accessible medium to be applicable in social reality.

Epistolary Practices and Textual Culture in the Academy Movement

BESIDES stressing Zhu Xi's letters as the main texts for Neo-Confucian studies, T'oegye and his followers were also interested in Zhu Xi's local programs designed to reform the Song society. In particular, they attempted to implement the local academy movement in the Chosŏn context. Local academies differed from the state schools installed in each county in several ways. First, local academies decided their own curricula and appointed headmasters based upon their academic excellence and moral stature. Academy education, in principle, put more emphasis on self-cultivation and moral perfection than did the state school system, which aimed to prepare students for the civil service examinations. Moreover, the horizontal transmission of knowledge through discussion held vital significance alongside the masters' lectures, from which students absorbed the prescribed information. Hence, the academy scholars established their scholarly identities through differences and distance from the state educational system. Second, local academies combined education with the rituals for past Confucian worthies enshrined in each academy. Unlike state schools, which conducted rituals for Confucian sages and worthies honored by the royal court, the local academies autonomously chose their own worthies who had explicit connections to both academy scholars and local residents. The ritualistic component in academy education encouraged scholars to embody what they would learn from Neo-Confucian texts by following

these ideal past examples. Regular participation in the rituals helped bind them into a deferential community, and they historicized their experiences and ideas through the symbolic connection to the past. In this way, the local academies brought an intense moral tone to the life of rural scholars.

Following T'oegye's educational plan, academy scholars meticulously read and studied his anthology of Zhu Xi's letters. T'oegye's emphasis on letters as the main genre for Neo-Confucian studies, in fact, was able to take root in the Chosŏn scholarly scene by virtue of academy education. And the rising demand for Confucian texts led academy scholars to work together on publication projects, triggering more extensive correspondence across regions. The establishment and management of local academies also required more active exchanges of letters. Moreover, academy scholars needed to hone the skills of recording, organizing, archiving, and retrieving diverse documents as the academy networks proliferated and their operation became complex. The scholars had to produce and manage many different practical and administrative texts, beyond Confucian classics and literary belles lettres. Because most petitionary documents submitted to local offices and the central government took epistolary formats, academy scholars' familiarity with diverse letter forms was an invaluable asset. Mastery of letter writing nurtured their "administrative literacy." Along with the expansion of epistolary space, the variety of writing involved in the management of local academies helped foster the new identity of Confucian literati outside officialdom. Rural literati were in a unique position between the state and society, which empowered them to form a legitimate political community.

RECONFIGURING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE AND LITERATI

For the first 150 years of the Chosŏn period, scholars turned their Confucian knowledge into sociopolitical power and participated in the state political discourse mainly through entering officialdom after passing the civil service examinations. Although this career path had guaranteed political prestige and social privileges throughout the dynasty, rural scholars began to develop a new strategy around 1550, after the tumultuous contention among various scholar groups in Chosŏn court politics from the late fifteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. The political turmoil can in part be attributed to the literati's different perspectives on how to apply the interpretations of Neo-Confucianism to real politics. Most court ministers, who had

established their authority by supporting several early Chosŏn kings who had ascended the throne in illegitimate ways, regarded Neo-Confucianism simply as a tool for efficient statecraft. Meanwhile, *sarim*,¹ who had entered officialdom by virtue of their prominent scholarship and high moral standards, called for the immediate realization of Neo-Confucian moral principles in politics. These different standpoints elevated tension in court and culminated in a series of four literati purges (*sahwa*) from 1498 to 1545 in which many *sarim* scholars were torpedoed.²

The most notable change in the lifestyle of rural scholars in this period came with T'oegye's local academy movement in the Yŏngnam area in south-eastern Korea, launched in 1549;³ Chu Sebung (1495–1554) had first established the institution in 1543.⁴ Both of them lamented the degradation of the state educational system and justified new academies as the bastion of Neo-Confucian morality and knowledge. Focusing on the turbulent political unrest in this period, some studies explain T'oegye's academy movement as his reaction to the literati purges. For example, the unstable political conditions threatening T'oegye's position during the last literati purge in 1545 were ascribed to his attention to the local academies.⁵ This implies that local academies became refuges that allowed *sarim* scholars to remain distant from the state while devoting themselves to Neo-Confucian studies. Another explanation highlights the rise of local academies as the reaction of *sarim* scholars, devising an alternative way to engage in court politics rather than cutting their connection to the central government. This interpretation explains the local academy movement as *sarim* scholars' strategy to enhance their political sway in rural society, based upon which they connected themselves to political factions in the central government. Local academies were "the offspring of literati purges and progenitors of factionalism."⁶ In this understanding, the political activism of academy scholars simply added local support to the pre-existing political institutions of the central government. Irrespective of their different interpretations of state-literati relations, these studies suggest that local academies triggered changes in the political participation of educated elites. While stressing the centrality of court politics and its impact upon the literati's political stance, however, these studies reduce the autonomous activism of rural scholars, in which the academy network played a crucial role by both fostering their group consciousness and facilitating communication, to a reactive appendage to the political discourse of the capital.

It is true that the Chosŏn state attempted to bring nonofficial scholars under its control from the beginning of the dynasty. The central government

had invested in the state school system and institutionalized the civil service examination to fill offices with those who were well versed in Confucian doctrine, which the state promoted not only as the social norm but also as the effective means of statecraft.⁷ Hence, in theory, the state version of Confucian knowledge was supposed to trickle down to the whole society. The Chosŏn state, however, had never successfully dominated in defining the meanings of the Confucian classics and setting the social functions of educated elites.⁸ The diplomatic tension with the early Ming court forced Korean scholars to painstakingly figure out the Neo-Confucian metaphysical concepts without tutelage from China. Thus, the state could not help but tolerate various interpretations of the social and political functions of Confucianism presented by different scholar groups. Moreover, the state school system began to decline from the early sixteenth century, partly because commoners began to enroll in local state schools to evade military duties.⁹ Rural elites welcomed the newly established local academies as an alternative school system only for themselves. The academies incrementally increased, particularly during the seventeenth century, to about seven hundred by the end of the Chosŏn dynasty.¹⁰ Combined with the divergence in interpretations of Confucian knowledge, the exponential increase of local academies shook Confucian literati loose from state supervision during the late Chosŏn period.

The slackening of state domination also coincided with increasing tension over economic resources between the metropolitan elites holding government positions and local elites in the countryside. The *sarim* scholar group prospered particularly in the Yŏngnam area, partly due to the economic stability of the region, which fostered the political independence of Yŏngnam scholars from the state. Yŏngnam Confucian literati, most of whom were small and midsize landlords, had nothing to lose, at least from an economic perspective, by staying away from the state-led political program; their economic independence was secured by the advanced agricultural technology of the region.¹¹ In the same vein, the various local Confucian projects developed in the Yŏngnam area in the early sixteenth century, such as community compacts (*hyangyak*) and local drinking and shooting ceremonies (*hyangŭmjurye*; *hyangsarye*), exhibit the attempts of local Confucian elites to institutionalize their dominance over the local economy. The local elites' assertion of autonomy in their hometowns conflicted with the political centralization backed by the already established court ministers and their pursuit of domination over local resources.¹² In fact, the Chosŏn

bureaucrats were at once large landlords and landowners who systematically endeavored to free their lands from the tax collectors.¹³ In order to gain the upper hand in local politics, these metropolitan elites collectively established liaison offices in the capital (*kyŏngjaeso*), through which they took control of the magistrates and elites of the regions where their lands were located. In this claim, *sarim* scholars suffered four literati purges because they were in competition with metropolitan elites over local resources.¹⁴ The proliferation of local academies at the turn of the seventeenth century, thus, took place in the context of the abolition of the capital liaison offices in 1603.¹⁵ The rise of local academies evinces the institutional attempt of countryside literati to create political independence and secure economic autonomy in their hometowns. If we focus on the competition for surplus agricultural production, conflict between the bureaucrats in the capital and rural elites was inevitable.

These important studies of the social, economic, and political conditions of the early Chosŏn period, however, do not fully explain how the multidirectional interactions between the state and the scholarly community formed around local academies. If the academy movement was meant to distance local scholar groups from factionalism-ridden court politics, and the contention between the high-ranking bureaucrats and local elites had resulted from competition over local resources, it would have made more sense for rural scholars to strive to secure their socioeconomic interests locally rather than raising their voices on national political issues through academy networks, which generally did not have direct repercussions for their local leadership and material interests. The local academy movement itself would have been unnecessary if Confucian elites in rural societies had lost interest in state politics and instead bolstered their sociopolitical independence and protected their economic autonomy. Likewise, if the academy movement reinforced the existing court politics through connections with factions in the central government, there would not have been such tension between metropolitan elites and academy scholars throughout the late Chosŏn period.

Refusing both complete independence from and the reinforcement of the preexisting political system, the early advocates of the academy movement were devising a new system of interaction with the central government. Despite the emphasis on autonomy in curriculum and scholarly activities, the early founders could not help relying on financial support and official endorsement from the state. For instance, the letter that T'oegye sent to the governor of Kyŏngsang in 1549 gives a good sense of how he envisioned the functions of local academies. In this letter T'oegye meticulously enumerated

the educational advantages of the academies over local state schools, which, he claimed, had lost their educational function due to their enormous emphasis on preparation for the civil service examinations. He also requested the court to confer a royal charter on Paegundong Academy;¹⁶ the court chartered the institution as Sosu Academy the following year.¹⁷ In fact, it became a convention that the court granted royal charters to major academies throughout the late Chosŏn period, which also brought practical benefits such as tax breaks and exemption from military and corvée duties to academy scholars and staff.¹⁸ In this way, the relationship between the central government and local academies began in collaborative symbiosis rather than antagonistic conflict. T'oegye seems to have intended to gain quasi-official status for local academies through relating them to the state educational programs instead of completely sequestering them from state influence. Likewise, the Chosŏn court must have offered financial support and official recognition to academies in the expectation of effective control over the rural societies through the leadership of academy scholars, who would function as intermediaries between the state authority and the rural population. Academy scholars could have been expected to deliver and reinforce the state moral directives to the local community.¹⁹ This situation, at a glance, gives the impression that academy scholars played the role of mouth-pieces for the state in rural areas. However, academy scholars appropriated this new social institution to boost their influence not only in local societies but also in the national political arena.

As discussed so far, the academy movement brought about complex interactions between the state and rural literati, in which the literati were neither completely separate from nor subordinate to the state. Tetsuo Najita's study of Kaitokudō Academy in Tokugawa Japan demonstrates that academy scholars could maintain the horizontal and communal inner life through the legitimation that they gained from the vertical political channels.²⁰ While Najita's point is partly applicable in explaining the political propensity of Chosŏn literati, local academies in Korea further hybridized horizontal and vertical political processes. In fact, the development of the horizontal academy network resulted in a directional shift in vertical political influence from the local scholarly community to the court, adding to the extant system in which the political agenda from the royal court spread to the rest of the social sectors. The political empowerment of the rural scholarly community through new local programs neither denied the existing system by creating a completely autonomous and independent political

group nor confirmed it by supporting the monarch or court ministers. These scholars rather promiscuously shuffled their collaboration with and antagonism toward existing political actors under disparate considerations, according to their own self-interest. These complex interactions among the monarch, bureaucrats, and local scholars generated the main dynamics of the Chosŏn political culture.

The partnership between the state and the elites, observed in both late imperial China and Chosŏn Korea, did not generate a public sphere completely separate from the state.²¹ In fact, the state emerged as a key player, creating and managing political information and news by persistently negotiating and collaborating with educated elites. Therefore, Habermas's model of a public sphere as the counterpart to state power does not apply to the Confucian polities of early modern East Asia.²² His bourgeois conception of the public sphere is not perfect after all, because the expansion of the public's discursive authority would not only make the people the state in theory but also threaten the autonomy of public opinion as a critical discursive check on the state.²³ Likewise, in Tokugawa Japan, academy scholars of disparate stations and philosophies debated and criticized virtually all issues about the polity. In this regard, the academies are the sharpest evidence of a "public sphere of opinion" in early modern Japan.²⁴ Although the bourgeois public sphere of western Europe is not the same as the "public sphere" developed in Chosŏn academies, the latter nevertheless showed the formation and expression of opinions, as in the case of Tokugawa Japan.²⁵ The rural literati of Korea chose a radical lifestyle, devoting themselves to scholarly activities and social interactions in local academies; this new way of life generated a peculiar link between the state and educated elites as both collaborators and antagonists.

THE EXPANSION OF EPISTOLARY SPACE IN THE ACADEMY MOVEMENT

The new relationship between the state and rural literati could emerge in part because academy scholars creatively used letter writing for both communicative and noncommunicative purposes. T'oegye's networking process while leading the academy movement caused a dramatic increase of correspondence in addition to the scholarly application of letters. As seen in table 4.1, T'oegye's correspondence abruptly surged starting in the late 1540s, and this change is more noticeable in his correspondence with nonfamily

TABLE 4.1. T'oegye's correspondence

Year	Correspondence with nonfamily members				Correspondence with family members			
	Letters received	Letters sent	Replies	Total	Letters received	Letters sent	Replies	Total
1533					1	1		1
1534								
1535								
1536								
1537								
1538					1	1		1
1539								
1540					2	3	4	7
1541					1	1	1	2
1542					2	2	2	4
1543					2	10	6	16
1544	1		2	2	1	3	3	6
1545	1		1	1	2	8	5	13
1546	1	1	1	2	3	7	9	16
1547	4		6	6	2	4	2	6
1548	2		3	3	4	30	20	50
1549	7	10	7	17	5	9	15	24
1550	4	2	6	8	4	9	9	18
1551	1		1	1	1	7	5	12

1552	7	3	4	7	2	9	4	13
1553	6	5	15	20	4	19	17	36
1554	10	5	13	18	6	15	13	28
1555	10	6	17	23	4	8	13	21
1556	10	5	23	28	6	15	19	34
1557	14	4	25	29	5	7	9	16
1558	12	9	34	43	7	18	9	27
1559	10	5	29	34	7	11	7	18
1560	21	19	37	56	6	6	8	14
1561	13	11	44	55	5	9	13	22
1562	27	16	62	78	3	1	5	6
1563	26	8	42	50	8	6	5	11
1564	32	13	52	65	14	12	23	35
1565	29	18	76	94	8	15	17	32
1566	47	19	81	100	11	19	30	49
1567	26	10	50	60	21	19	33	52
1568	28	15	55	70	18	20	45	65
1569	30	13	71	84	19	25	42	67
1570	33	6	80	86	16	23	53	76
Unspecified	51	27	61	88	12		12	12
Total	463	230	898	1128	213	352	458	810

Source: Kwŏn Obong, “T’oegye sŏnsaeng ūi kasŏ (wan),” *T’oegye hakpo* 43 (1984): 53.

members. The dearth of correspondence before this period does not necessarily mean that T'oegye seldom sent and received letters. However, we need to consider the possible reasons the volume of letters increased, particularly those exchanged beyond the family. The rise in T'oegye's correspondence coincided with his anthologization of Zhu Xi's letters in the 1550s and his involvement in the Four-Seven Debate from 1559 to 1566. Moreover, the formation of interregional scholarly networks through the local academy movement elevated the significance of letter writing as an effective communicative tool. The meticulous inclusion of letters in the collection of T'oegye's writings shows that both T'oegye himself and the compilers of the collection realized the importance of this genre. The major academic, social, and political changes in late sixteenth-century Korea converged in letter writing—a practice too mundane to attract special attention. Local scholars who joined T'oegye's academy movement formed a new “interpretive community,” to borrow Stanley Fish's term, whose strategy of reading letters was refashioned to deliver social meanings different from their communicative functions.²⁶ Now letters not only facilitated communication among members of new academy networks but also constituted the core reading materials for Neo-Confucian studies. Only letters, not writings in other genres, could buttress the ideological basis of these academies as the authentic centers of Neo-Confucian scholarship. The extensive usage of letters cohesively integrated the human and discursive networks of the Chosŏn scholarly community. In other words, T'oegye and the scholars under his influence underscored the genre of letters as the most suitable textual means articulating their ideology, and it was also the written mode by which they could stay connected and rally together.

T'oegye and his collaborators relied on exchanges of letters to iron out diverse problems that emerged in the local academy movement. In particular, the epistolary discussions were instrumental in resolving contention over the selection of past Confucian worthies. Rituals commemorating them were one of two central functions of academies, along with educating rural scholars, and figured prominently in shaping the scholars' identity. The intergenerational connection created in ritual practices allowed academy scholars to historicize their ideas and interactions, and the regular performance of rituals promoted among participants a sense of membership in the same community.²⁷ This significance of rituals even influenced the architectural layout of academies. Unlike local state schools, where shrines were generally located behind lecture halls, the local academies placed their

shrines to the east of the lecture hall to reflect Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals*.²⁸ Rural literati attempted to perform academy rituals in the correct spatial protocol as given in the Confucian classics so that they could claim their difference from and superiority to the state authority. When Chosŏn scholars deepened their understanding of Confucian rituals in the seventeenth century, they rigidly adhered to the ancient protocol by placing shrines in the front part of the academy complex and the lecture halls and dormitories in the back (*myoch'imje*). With this architectural embodiment of Neo-Confucian ritual formality, local academies represented the exclusive space for orthodox learning.²⁹ Rituals for past Confucian worthies and shrines built for them made academies the "mnemonic architecture" that embodied historical memory.³⁰

The symbolic gravity of the academy rituals drew diverse social actors into the process of deciding who would be enshrined, including the descendants of enshrined figures, local elites, and the state authorities. Contention frequently erupted over ritual issues, with heated debates through both face-to-face meetings and extensive exchanges of letters. T'oegye's followers who were local magistrates led the early phase of the academy movement. Their collaboration with T'oegye reveals how contentious the ritual issues could be. Hwang Chunnyang was one of the major collaborators, and his career as a local magistrate allowed him to provide official resources needed for T'oegye's agenda. When Hwang was appointed magistrate of Sŏngju in 1560, his predecessor, No Kyŏngnin (1516–1568), had already established Yŏngbong Academy. However, it did not easily take root in the scholarly culture of Sŏngju owing to the debates over the enshrinement of past worthies.³¹

Correspondence among T'oegye, Hwang Chunnyang, and No Kyŏngnin demonstrates that all parties involved in this debate considered it a matter of identity building. Since Hwang had begun to involve himself in the affairs of Yŏngbong Academy, he had expressed his disagreement with No's attempt to enshrine Yi Chonyŏn (1269–1343) and his grandson Yi Inbok (1308–1374) there; the men were from Sŏngju and had outstanding merit as loyal court ministers during the Koryŏ dynasty. No had built a shrine for the two Yis nearby, and he wanted to merge the shrine with the academy. Although Hwang admitted that the two Yis should be honored as local worthies, he made it clear, in his reply to No, that local worthies praised for their merits in officialdom were not qualified to be enshrined in the academy. Those to be enshrined should "inherit [the scholarly tradition of] Confucian sages and illuminate younger scholars [with their moral virtues and lofty scholarship]."³²

He further argued that “the two Yis belong to the category of local worthies who should be enshrined in local shrines; thus, it is correct to build another shrine for them.”³³ The problem lay in the proximity of Yŏngbong Academy and the shrine. This, Hwang argued, forced academy slaves to work to maintain the shrine. More seriously, he claimed, it would be unavoidable that academy scholars would see ritual services for the two Yis occurring in the shrine right next to their academy, and it would be difficult for them to ignore the activities.³⁴ T’oegye supported Hwang’s argument in his reply to No’s letter requesting that T’oegye write a record of Yŏngbong Academy. He pointed out that Yi Chonyŏn, in his portrait, holds Buddhist beads in his hand. T’oegye argued that enshrining a figure with a penchant for Buddhism in the academy would not be the right way to offer Neo-Confucian exemplars for local scholars. T’oegye asserted that enshrinement in local academies was designed to foster the Neo-Confucian Way.³⁵

Hwang suggested that No enshrine Kim Koengp’il (1454–1504) instead of the two Yis; he of course fit the standard of “Confucian worthy,” and in addition, his wife was from Sŏngju and his descendants were still living there. Hwang asked No to discuss this possibility with the Sŏngju scholars,³⁶ and they welcomed Kim as an ideal figure to enshrine. No, however, attempted to enshrine Kim together with the two Yis rather than alone. Now the point of debate shifted to the order of seats for ritual tablets among these three worthies in the same shrine. T’oegye’s reply to No on this issue illustrates the crux of this debate. No had asked T’oegye’s opinion about arranging the seats by birth year. In his reply, T’oegye elucidated how significant and complicated this issue was by bringing up several other issues linked to enshrining past worthies:

When it comes to the issue of the order of seats [in enshrining several worthies together], if we enshrine worthies in terms of their ages as you propose, we have to locate the two Yis at the eastern wall and Kim at the western wall of the shrine. Although it appears all right, I wonder whether there is any precedent that vacated the major seat of the shrine facing south and only used seats in the east and west. If there is any, it is just fine. But if not, we cannot make an impromptu law [to suit our own interests]. If it is decided to assign the seat facing south to one of these worthies, who is supposed to take it? Doesn’t it have to be Yi Chonyŏn in terms of age? However, doesn’t it have to be Kim Koengp’il in terms of dedication to the Neo-Confucian Way? I don’t think either of the above possibilities is right.

If it is decided not to differentiate the order of seats and arrange all three worthies on the seat facing south and have them lined up from west to east, we end up facing the same difficulty in deciding this sequence [from west to east] too. . . . Although establishing shrines and deciding enshrinees in the academies is not the business of the royal court, it will eventually be informed. Thus, it is such an important issue to set the ritual principles.³⁷

T'oegye precisely understood the impact of academy ritual practices in terms of their prescriptive potential in configuring Neo-Confucian culture. In another letter to No, T'oegye again stated, "The enshrinement of worthies should be decided based on their Neo-Confucian scholarship because academies are established in order to promote the Neo-Confucian Way."³⁸

However, T'oegye opposed removing the two Yis because he thought it was too much to enshrine Kim at the expense of expelling other local worthies.³⁹ In his letter to Hwang, he revisited this issue by scrutinizing the details of how to arrange the order of tablets:

How has the order of seats been decided? I still think it should be based upon Neo-Confucian scholarship. However, I do not think it is proper to enshrine the two Yis under Kim Koengp'il. . . . As for scholarship, the two Yis do not have something that can be called the Neo-Confucian Way. When it comes to moral virtue, the three of them show no distinct difference. Then, it seems improper, in terms of both the substance of this affair and human emotion, to enshrine loyal and virtuous worthies of the previous dynasty [under Kim] only in the name of Neo-Confucian scholarship. What do you say about it? So, I think the two Yis should be enshrined below Kim, but they should be arranged together facing south. I suggest placing a screen between the tablets for Kim Koengp'il and Yi Chonyŏn so that one tablet does not dominate the other.⁴⁰

Hwang, however, persisted in his objection against enshrining the two Yis together with Kim. One of his letters to T'oegye shows clearly how the Sŏngju scholars reacted. Scholars in this area had a meeting in Yŏngbong Academy to discuss the issue. Although there is no description of who they were or how they gathered, they put the issue to a vote. All of them voted for enshrining Kim as the major figure, and about ten voted for enshrining Yi Inbok below Kim. But scholars opposed enshrining Yi Chonyŏn, arguing that "the old man with Buddhist beads in his hand" could not be enshrined

in an academy. This letter states that scholars at the meeting claimed that students who wanted to dedicate themselves to Neo-Confucian scholarship would leave the academy at once if Yi Chonyŏn were to be enshrined.⁴¹ What is interesting in this debate is the silence regarding what Neo-Confucian scholarship stands for in the rhetoric that both T'oegye and Hwang constantly used as the standard for evaluating past worthies. The extensive exchange of letters and subsequent meetings of scholars allowed them to pin down this rather daunting idea. Thus, the various deliberations that took place in exchanges of letters enabled scholars in T'oegye's circle to figure out how to inculcate the Neo-Confucian ritual norms as part of their self-identity.

Meanwhile, T'oegye grew suspicious about Yi Inbok's personality, owing to several discrepant descriptions of him in different sources, and even suggested enshrining Kim Chongjik (1431–1492) instead. Although not from the Sŏngju area, Kim Chongjik, who taught Kim Koengp'il, had studied in the state school of this town.⁴² The absence of sources does not allow us to trace how this issue developed thereafter. In 1568, five years after Hwang Chun-nyang's death, Chŏng Ku (1543–1620), who was from Sŏngju, led the local scholars to decide on the issues of enshrinement and the name of the academy. His letter to T'oegye written in that year shows that Sŏngju scholars tried to enshrine two Neo-Confucian scholars of Song China, Cheng Yi (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi, in the major post of the shrine and Kim Koengp'il below them, and they followed Zhu Xi's precedent by naming the building after a place.⁴³ These two Chinese scholars were enshrined because Sŏngju has places named after the pen names of Cheng and Zhu, which are Ich'ŏn and Un'gok, respectively. The name of the academy was therefore changed to Ch'ŏn'gok Academy, taking the second characters of those place-names.⁴⁴ Although T'oegye did not lead the discussion of these issues, Chŏng's letter to him shows that Sŏngju scholars set about conducting academy affairs after confirming his concurrence.⁴⁵ After the ritual for enshrining these past worthies was completed, Chŏng sent another letter to T'oegye to report on it. He also sought T'oegye's opinion on the details of academy ritual and the qualifications to be used in selecting academy scholars.⁴⁶

T'oegye's collaboration with Yi Chŏng (1512–1571) also shows how the elaborate exchanges of letters between them shaped the decisions about rituals in the academies. Yi and T'oegye worked together at the Royal Academy (Sŏnggyun'gwan) in 1552 respectively as an assistant master and a headmaster, and they solidified their relationship through academic exchanges.⁴⁷ Yi was motivated to further the academy movement and publication of

Confucian texts. When he went to serve as the magistrate of Kyōngju, the old capital of the Silla Kingdom, in 1560, T'oegye and Yi committed themselves to fostering both the publication project and the academy movement. In particular, the issue of enshrinement at Sōak Academy lasted throughout Yi's tenure in Kyōngju, for two and a half years. Yi made a tour of inspection around the tombs of Silla kings right after his inauguration and lamented their dilapidated condition. The tombs of King Muyōl (r. 654–661) and Kim Yusin (595–673), in particular, attracted his attention. The record of conduct of Yi reads that he wrote ritual orations for these men and performed sacrificial rites as a token of respect for their merit in unifying three kingdoms in the seventh century. He also established Sōak Academy near the tombs of these two worthies.⁴⁸ As in the case of Yōngbong Academy, the focus of debate was the qualification of past worthies to be enshrined there. *The Record of Sōak Academy* (Sōak chi) briefly explains that Yi Chōng built a shrine for Kim Yusin, and local scholars suggested enshrining the eminent Silla scholars—Sōl Ch'ong (d.u.) and Ch'oe Ch'iwōn (857–?)—together with Kim.⁴⁹ The correspondence between T'oegye and Yi, however, shows that the issue brought about contentious debates among Kyōngju scholars as well as scholar-officials in Seoul. According to T'oegye's letter to Yi in 1561, a rumor that Yi was building a huge Buddhist temple to perform rituals for King Muyōl and Kim Yusin was spread in Seoul and drew harsh criticism from court ministers. T'oegye suggested to Yi that he repair the tombs of King Muyōl and Kim Yusin to prevent people from freely entering them. He further advised Yi to enshrine only Kim Yusin and to have this institution focus on enhancing Neo-Confucian scholarship. T'oegye believed that doing so would justify the establishment of the academy and stop the criticism. He deplored the situation in which the academies suffered all these slanders, as in the case of Yōngbong Academy.⁵⁰

Even though Yi accepted T'oegye's suggestion, he wanted to enshrine two late-Koryō Confucian scholars, Yi Chehyōn (1287–1367) and Yi Chono (1341–1371), together with Kim Yusin. Because Yi Chōng had decided that the shrine would be called the Shrine for Local Worthies (Hyanghyōnsa), T'oegye agreed that all three should be enshrined together.⁵¹ T'oegye later argued that even Kim Yusin, as well as Yi Chehyōn and Yi Chono, should be enshrined in a local shrine but not in the academy, considering their lack of commitment to the Confucian Way. He elaborated on this issue again in his 1562 letter to Yi, in which he argued that local elites should take care of the rituals for the three local worthies. He further suggested that Yi maintain

the academy as a place for upholding Neo-Confucian scholarship.⁵² Although no remaining source explains why T'oegye changed his opinion on the enshrinement, the painstaking debates on the same ritual question happened almost concurrently at Yöngbong Academy. He may have sharpened his viewpoint as he dealt with the same issue in two different areas. His letter addressed to Hwang in this year shows that the case of Yöngbong Academy functioned as a reference for him in resolving the case of Söak Academy. T'oegye here asserted the required qualification of past worthies for enshrinement:

I heard that Yi Chöng is in trouble [with the issue of enshrinement]. He gave up the idea to build a new shrine for King Muyöl. . . . However, he wants to enshrine Yi Chehyön and Yi Chono in addition to Kim Yusin. I do not think it is a bad idea to have local people perform rituals for local worthies. However, it is not right to have scholars studying in the academy do it because it is not proper to enshrine people with military merit like Kim Yusin there. It will cause contentious debates and will be more serious than the case of Yöngbong Academy. I cannot figure out how Yi Chöng will take care of this.⁵³

In both cases, the distinction between local and Confucian worthies brought about contention in setting the standard for enshrinement. Magistrates such as No and Yi were inclined to understand the academy rituals as part of administrative affairs in the local society. However, for T'oegye, the ritual practices in the academy symbolized the reciprocity between the localization of Neo-Confucian principles and the universalization of local heritage as a model of Neo-Confucian culture. Therefore, the process of deciding on worthies to be enshrined not only defined the lineage of Neo-Confucian scholarship but also set locality at the center of Confucian civilization. The intention of the magistrates who took care of practical needs for the establishment of academies, however, could not be ignored. T'oegye's letter to Yi in 1563 exhibits the reconciliation between Yi and Kyöngju scholars on this issue. Söak Academy came to enshrine Kim Yusin, following Yi's opinion, together with Söl Ch'ong and Ch'oe Ch'iwön, following the opinion of local scholars.⁵⁴ T'oegye and scholars in his circle extensively exchanged letters as the major communicative tools in resolving their pivotal concerns, in order for this new institution to function as the center of the local scholarly community. In this respect, both direct and indirect

participation in epistolary practices, either as correspondents or in expressing opinions about issues discussed in letters, characterized membership in the new scholarly community formed around local academies. Epistolary interactions aptly fostered both communicative efficiency and discursive cooperation.

However, this new trend, did not attract all scholars. For instance, Chŏng Inhong (1535–1623) denounced it: “T’oegye collaborated with a group of scholars, including Yi Chŏng and Hwang Chunnyang, who were driven out by genuine Confucians due to their greed for profits and shamelessness. T’oegye corresponded with them to the extent to form [several volumes of] books [with these letters] while [pretending to] discuss Neo-Confucian learning and model themselves after past Confucian worthies.”⁵⁵ This criticism shows that contemporary scholars considered the extensive exchange of letters part of the new networking around academies. In particular, Chŏng pinpointed new Neo-Confucian scholarship, extensive letter writing, and the subsequent publication of these letters as characteristics of social networking in T’oegye’s circle. Thus a new scholarship and written culture together composed a distinctive lifestyle and identity for a specific emerging scholar group.

The simultaneous application of the genre of letters for both academic scrutiny and sociopolitical agendas obscured the boundary between these two domains at the textual level; the language and rhetoric employed for academic and political purposes converged and mixed. Epistolary practices in the local academy networks, therefore, took on both scholarly and sociopolitical connotations even in casual communication. The academic discourse, the sociopolitical agenda, and the mode of textual practice tightly interlocked to form the intellectual culture of the period. Participation in epistolary networks became the source of scholarly and political authority for local Confucian scholars. The distinction made between the participants and the nonparticipants in the local scholarly scene clearly articulated the lines drawn in the political and intellectual topography of Chosŏn in this period.

PUBLICATION OF LETTERS, PUBLICATION THROUGH LETTERS

Following the vision of T’oegye, academy scholars read letters for their studies and exchanged their views about them through either face-to-face

discussions or correspondence. Moreover, the resources and networks formed around the local academies enabled the rural scholars to publish these letter anthologies for wider dissemination. Many other scholarly titles were also produced in academies, which developed into the most prominent nonofficial publication centers during the late Chosŏn period. Book production previously had been dominated by the state authorities and Buddhist temples.⁵⁶ According to Sŏ Yugu's (1764–1845) *Surveys on Publications* (Nup'an'go), for instance, seventy-eight academies published 167 titles until 1796. And about 80 percent of these titles were the collected writings of individual scholars. At first, academies published the collected writings of those who were enshrined there, but from the late seventeenth century, the descendants dominated the publication of their ancestors' collected writings by using the printing facilities at academies. These publishing academies were predominantly located in the Yŏngnam area.⁵⁷ The number of printed copies of each book varied from twenty to three hundred, which were distributed to descendants and related academies or local schools. In some cases, academy scholars presented newly published copies to the royal court to honor the authors.⁵⁸ In many cases, the book gifts between academies formed the most substantial part of their book collections, which made them the major library facilities in local societies.⁵⁹ However, book gifts were exchanged only between academies advocating the same political faction. Due to the politicization of library collections, it was hardly possible to find religious titles or books for practical purposes.⁶⁰ In academies, the books published and those included in the library collections functioned as a conspicuous political statement.

The publication project brought together many hands in the multifarious processes of compiling, editing, proofreading, printing, and distributing books. The importance of collaboration encouraged extensive interactions through correspondence among participants. In this regard, it is no surprise that T'oegye's collaborators in the local academy movement dominated the publication projects. Yi Chŏng particularly played an active role. His record of conduct reads, "If there were any books written by either Chinese or Korean scholars on Neo-Confucianism that had not been published and introduced throughout the country, Yi and T'oegye copyedited and published them together through exchanging [letters]."⁶¹ This record enumerates fifteen such titles published through their epistolary collaboration.⁶² As both central curriculum and a major means of communication for scholarly activities, letters became an indispensable genre.

The letters exchanged between T'oegye and Hwang Chunnyang also show how they worked on publication projects while developing local academy networks. Hwang, in particular, led the publication of T'oegye's anthology *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters*. By 1558, T'oegye and Hwang had already gone through five or six revisions to reduce typographical mistakes and omissions caused in the course of transcription by several different people.⁶³ Besides discussing practical matters such as the selection of printing type,⁶⁴ they debated further about the fact that T'oegye annotated and punctuated Zhu Xi's letters while anthologizing them. He added explanatory notes at the beginning of each volume about the people who appeared in it. He also made notes at the beginning or end of each letter regarding its contents. More active interposition of T'oegye's voice can be observed in his interlinear annotations on terms and events added within the original letters. T'oegye said that although he initially worked on annotations to aid his memory, he later came to use them to clarify in what contexts Zhu Xi had written those letters, and how Zhu Xi lived his life.⁶⁵

The correspondence between T'oegye and Hwang deliberated on the impact of editorial changes on textual meanings. In 1558, Hwang brought up a very significant point about the conflict between authorial intention and editorial responsibility. Because T'oegye had added various editorial touches to Zhu Xi's letters, Hwang argued that T'oegye should take into account how the editing process would unexpectedly influence the readership.

It seems that there is no room left for further scrutiny in this book in terms of both the broadness of observations and the precision of annotations. However, some are detailed and others are not. Also, there are some parts that do not provide annotations on [some] questions that are to be further expounded. . . . It is something to be happy about to know the meaning of one character, if one is studying. In publication, however, the work would be "incomplete" if one thing were left unexplained. If we print this book in a slovenly way like this, I am afraid it will end up being incomplete. In some parts, meanings are printed in big characters, [which are for the original quotations from Zhu Xi's writings,] and annotations are not added [in small characters]. This may cause sincere scholars who seek the Neo-Confucian Way to find teachers and get answers to their questions. Or, it may cause those who borrow and transcribe this book not to discover the problems, although they diligently look for them. What do you say about this heedlessness? . . . Although your anthology was produced for private use,

I am not sure whether scholars regard this book as proper for the present.
Can you figure out what kind of concerns the deficiencies of this book
might cause people?⁶⁶

At first, however, T'oegye did not take Hwang's concern seriously. In his reply in 1558, he humbly admitted that all the fault was his because he dared to anthologize and annotate Zhu Xi's letters, separating them from their original form. He ascribed the errors accumulated in the course of this process to the lack of references as well as to his lack of enthusiasm. Without offering any resolution for the problem that Hwang raised, T'oegye simply expressed his appreciation by mentioning how fortunate he was to have Hwang's insight in revising the anthology.⁶⁷ T'oegye did not understand why Hwang cared so much about the act of anthologizing and annotating in terms of defining the textual meanings. In fact, Hwang understood the publication of this anthology with T'oegye's annotations to be the creation of new meanings for Zhu Xi's letters, and he emphasized this point as the major editorial concern.

Accordingly, T'oegye came to take it seriously. In another letter, he claimed that annotations on typographical errors and suspicious characters should be added, and he also argued that there should be no fault in his annotations on the life of Zhu Xi, because he had referred to *The Record of Master Zhu Xi's Conduct* (Chuja haengjang). T'oegye underscored the significance of his annotations because they would guide readers to understand how Zhu Xi's scholarship was actually composed. Here he claimed that if the annotations were to be removed because they were unclear or incomplete, there would be another gap because the annotations were necessary for readers' understanding.⁶⁸

T'oegye wrote a preface to the anthology in 1558, the year of the epistolary discussion with Hwang. Further, he displayed a very interesting strategy for controlling the meanings produced through annotating Zhu Xi's letters. He asked Hwang to write an epilogue to share the responsibility for publication in 1561.⁶⁹ Contention about controlling the meanings of Zhu Xi's letters was concentrated in paratextual spaces appended to the original letters. Paratextual elements are subordinate to their texts, and their effects rest upon subconscious influences on the author's interests rather than direct impositions of meanings.⁷⁰ This is why they function as "thresholds" that transform texts into books by linking the discourses of texts and of

publishing. However, the annotator's work does not always remain subordinate to the author's intentions. Although the act of annotating certainly takes authority from the canonicity of the texts commented on, this same act alienates annotators from the texts by highlighting the contextual gap between textual production and annotation.⁷¹ In particular, T'oegye's preface placed before Zhu Xi's letters could have directed the readers' understanding of the main texts by setting them in the context of editing rather than of original texts. Here, he articulated that his purpose in reading Zhu Xi's writings was initially to learn Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian scholarship. This prescribed the meaning of Zhu Xi's letters in a scholarly frame; letters became the "metatexts" of Neo-Confucianism. The process of anthologization, as such, excluded letters that might not fit this reading strategy. This clear statement by the editor, placed before the main texts, could have molded readers' interpretations.

Decisions about the technology of book production also triggered elaborate epistolary discussions. Whereas the first three versions of this anthology were printed using movable type, the following five versions were printed with woodblocks (see table 3.1). Because woodblock printing antedates movable type, the latter is generally considered more advanced technologically. However, the return to woodblock printing in publishing *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* betrays this perception. T'oegye's letter to Yu Chungnyŏng written in 1566 shows how scholars involved in the publication deliberated on this issue. It specifically elucidates the advantage of woodblock printing, particularly in manipulating paratextual elements:

After reading your eldest son's [Yu Unnyong (1539–1601)] letter, I learned of the plan to republish [*The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters*] with headnotes added [in the empty space of the upper parts of pages]. There is nothing wrong with adding headnotes to rectify errors and add annotations, as shown in the recent publication of *The Record of Master Zhu Xi's Conduct* in Yangsan. Your son mentioned that although it is all right if there is space in the upper part of each page, it is impossible [to emend it] if there is no space. However, I don't think it is a problem. To rectify errors and add the missing parts after publishing *The Record of Master Zhu Xi's Conduct* in Yangsan, Pae Samik [1534–1588], who took charge of this process, carved out every single error and used separate wood pieces for

those parts [which fit into the parts carved out] to insert the correct contents. In this way, it is not impossible. Also, as to adding sentences and annotations . . . as your son said, “old characters on woodblocks should be carved out and newly added contents should be engraved in thin characters.”⁷²

As this quotation illustrates, woodblock printing allows for corrections in the main texts as well as the insertion of paratextual elements even after publication is completed. Although carving requires enormous energy and painstaking concentration, the ability to rework the blocks even after publication rendered this method feasible. Movable type did not allow publishers to revisit the contents of publications, because the type sets were disassembled in order to be used for other projects. Ki Taesŭng, in his epilogue to the 1567 version, explained that this book had not been widely distributed due to the use of movable type. He argued that although the anthology had been published in Sŏngju, Haeju, and P’yŏngyang, one after the other, the disassembly of the type sets even before enough volumes had been printed prevented its wide dissemination. Ki explained that Yu Chungnyŏng, as the magistrate of Chŏngju, printed this book again by carving woodblocks, which captured it permanently.⁷³ In this sense, woodblock printing was more advantageous than movable type for printing many books without temporal limitation. More significantly, publishers had to invest considerable resources to cast enough numbers and varieties of type to be able to publish books. Kai-wing Chow presents several advantages of woodblock printing in discussing the print culture of early modern China: freedom in page layout, flexibility in time of production, a low level of investment, minimal skill required, and great mobility.⁷⁴ Although we cannot directly apply all these paratextual, technological, and economic merits of woodblock printing in explaining the sixteenth-century Chosŏn context, we can see that T’oegye appreciated them in his publication project.

The extensive exchange of letters allowed T’oegye and his collaborators to iron out various issues surrounding the publication of key titles in the rise of the new Neo-Confucian moral philosophy. Besides handling practical and technical questions, these scholars were able to deliberate on the ways the material conditions of reading would shape the meaning of texts. The textualization of all these issues in epistolary space turned out to be the central process of identity building for the local scholarly community.

ACADEMIES AND THE CULTURE OF RECORD KEEPING

Apart from the intensive reading and elaborate publication of letters as the principal pedagogical tools, rural scholars could find an alternative sociopolitical life at the local level through the quasi-official function of local academies. At the core of this alternative lifestyle lay the rise of a new textual culture in academy networks. Academy affairs were documented and archived, so the production and management of texts became a crucial part of daily life for scholars. They sharpened their skills and innovated to produce, update, circulate, distribute, and archive various documents and textual ephemera. Academy scholars came to match clerks in government offices in their record-keeping expertise. For instance, the regulations for the students were drafted, displayed, preserved, and retrieved, just as magistrates kept and referred to the law codes. The rosters of enrolled students were recorded and updated regularly by academy staff, similar to the household registries filed in the magistrates' offices. The academy staff also kept records for the properties and ledgers with information about financial resources, which required them to have highly specialized proficiency in bookkeeping. The special events and occasions organized in the academies were meticulously chronicled in a similar manner as official records were created.

Here, Raymond Williams's critique of literary criticism and the conventional notion of literature is very useful to better frame the complexity of the written culture developed in local academies. Williams claims that canonical norms that formed around literary genres, particularly novels as the literary symbol of the rise of the modern nation-state, limit our appreciation of the "multiplicity of writing."⁷⁵ Inspired by this claim, Brinkley Messick shows how the ordinary genres of "local bureaucratic and legal literatures" constructed a distinctive set of non-Western identities in the northern highland of Yemen, which was not colonized by Western powers.⁷⁶ While agreeing with the problematic elaborated by both, I find the textual culture developed in Chosŏn local academies more ambiguous in calibrating between the canonical literary genre and the "multiplicity of writing." Because the practice of writing and reading letters was crucial in generating new scholarly identities for local literati, letters developed into a canonical genre for academy scholars. At the same time, they needed to familiarize themselves with multiple local administrative literatures, which quite often

took epistolary format, in order to create their actual social roles. In this respect, the “canonical literature” was not always antithetical to the “multiplicity of writing” in Chosŏn scholarly culture. This chameleonlike utilization of letters for everything from highly philosophical discourses to mundane exchanges empowered their users to both weather the challenges in daily life and raise their voices on sociopolitical issues with national impact.

The documents preserved in Tosan Academy, which functioned as the academic center for T'oegye and his intellectual offspring throughout the late Chosŏn period, illuminate the wide gamut of textual practices as well as the sociopolitical connotations that they delivered. Scholars at this academy had nurtured the habit of recording the rituals performed there. For instance, *The List of Years of the Establishment of Academies* (Sŏwŏn ch'anggŏn yŏnjo) itemized the information about important academies where T'oegye and his ancestors or disciples were enshrined, also logging the major rituals performed until the late eighteenth century.⁷⁷ Similarly, *The Traces of Events in Tosan Academy* (Tosan Sŏwŏn sajŏk) chronicled the details of major rituals performed from the establishment of this academy to 1868.⁷⁸ Some were sponsored by the monarch and performed on his behalf by ministers dispatched from the royal court. On these occasions, the preparation for and processes of performance were more meticulously delineated.⁷⁹ The royal court bestowed such rituals nine times in total from 1614 to 1839, and these records offer eyewitness accounts of academy scholars' interaction with the central government. The significance of the rituals also led academy scholars to produce *The Record of Ceremonies* (Holgi), which documented the detailed sequence of ritual performance for reference purposes. The rituals represented the ultimate mastery of classical knowledge and its embodiment; thus their execution was an integral part of academy education. The complexity of the ritual protocols, however, could always cause difficulties in actual performance. For instance, the regular ritual for T'oegye and Cho Mok, who were enshrined at Tosan Academy, required eight participants to follow eighty-two steps in a seamless flow.⁸⁰ The instructions for local drinking ceremonies held there comprised eighteen chapters, which respectively ordained as many as forty-nine steps.⁸¹ Without the aid of detailed records, it was virtually impossible to replicate the rituals as they had been designed. The academy scholars thus discharged a double-layered process of embodiment: through performing rituals in academy settings and also by restaging them in the texts. The ability to reciprocate between

corporeal and textual domains became the core of academy rituals, demonstrating scholars' exclusive connection to past ideals, which were too elusive not to put in writing.

Tosan Academy also left seven daily records on controversial issues that the scholars had to communally resolve, including contention between the academy scholars and the secondary status groups who requested equal educational and ritual rights, debates surrounding the theft of T'oegye's ritual tablet from the shrine, the installation of a new ritual tablet for Cho Mok, and the publication of the roster of T'oegye school scholars. The chronicles frequently employed an intertextual structure to draw conclusions that would defuse any further contention. For instance, the requests of the concubines' sons from elite families to gain equal access to the academy from 1884 to 1885 caused both these secondary sons and the academy scholars to produce various documents, which were either circulated in the local communities or submitted to the government offices.⁸² The record of this particular event displays how the academy scholars manipulated these texts to create a coherent narrative supporting their stance. The contention began in October 1884, when the concubines' sons presented a government decision document (*kwanmun*) to Tosan Academy, which stipulated that secondary sons had permission to attend local academies and requested their equal participation in academy affairs. The entry for this day includes the excerpt from this *kwanmun* document with which the academy scholars justified spurning the request. They claimed that the decision applied only to the particular case that had led the government to issue the document.⁸³ This rejection sparked a physical confrontation between the two groups. On the tenth day of the second month in 1885, the secondary sons beat up an academy slave and threatened to destroy the houses of T'oegye's descendants.⁸⁴ Four days later, the academy scholars held a meeting to respond to this incident and issued two documents—the agreement of academy scholars (*sŏwŏn wanŭi*) and the items agreed upon among T'oegye's clan members (*chongdang chŏlmok*)—which are included in the record in full. These documents reconfirmed the barring of concubines' sons from academy affairs and the collective retaliation against them that would occur if physical confrontations ever happened again.⁸⁵ Tosan Academy, however, began to receive a written blitz by two groups of concubines' sons from different areas. Their criticism took the form of circular letters (*t'ongmun*) signed by all the members. This particular genre, in this particular case, effectively stressed the senders' unity and resolution to protest as a group. Unlike for the texts

produced by academy scholars themselves, the record includes only very short summaries of the circular letters with negative comments on them, basically reducing the claims made by the concubines' sons to senseless whining. An astonishing reversal, however, took place when Kim Chinu (d.u.), a scholar from Andong, presented a memorial to the throne in which he criticized the scholars of Tosan Academy for not following the court decision and opening their gate to concubines' sons. The king responded that this was a vicious case that the court should investigate.⁸⁶ The record exceptionally includes the whole draft of this memorial. Following this, academy scholars extracted the several key phrases from Kim's memorial that could undermine their claims and added their justifications for them item by item.⁸⁷ Two months later, more interestingly, two scholars from Tosan Academy submitted a petition reiterating this record to the provincial governor's office.⁸⁸

The absence of further information does not allow us to trace how this issue was brought to a conclusion. However, the complexity and gravity of the situation required the academy scholars to create a meticulous record that included other related documents, such as the memorial to the throne, the agreements among the scholars, excerpts from government documents, and so on. The scholars needed the skill to analyze various genres of administrative documents and public texts and synthesize them with their own narratives. This textual culture emerging in local academies brought about a new kind of relationship with texts in the local literati's daily life. Coherent intertextual composition in record keeping was completely different from reading Confucian classics and writing treatises on them. This new relation took root in local societies through the mundane textual administration in the daily management of academies. Far from creating distance from the state authorities, this made negotiation with local magistrates' offices routine in academy life.

MUNDANE DOCUMENTATION AND THE RISE OF QUASI-ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

Among many issues, the management of academy properties required scholars to interact with state authorities. Lands and slaves formed the two pillars of an academy's economy,⁸⁹ so the scholars needed to keep records of the changes in them, which involved various kinds of paperwork. The slaves as property differed from lands due to the fluctuations in the size of holdings.

Deaths and births necessitated constant updates of the slave roster (*nobian*) over generations.⁹⁰ The purchase of slaves was another variable, but that was under close scrutiny by the state. The state had good reason to monitor such transactions because the slaves assigned to the academies were exempt from paying taxes and from military duties. Selling and buying slaves required approval from the magistrates' offices, for which academies had to put together a petition (*soji*), proof of transactions (*maemae mun'gi*), and the statements of sellers and witnesses (*ch'osa*). Tosan Academy has twenty sets of documents that were filed to purchase slaves. Remarkably, all but four of them were produced in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This shows that, except during the first several decades after its establishment, the academy had greater interest in slaves' marriages and births to swell its holdings than in direct purchases, which required coping with state surveillance.

Marriages between academy slaves and slaves owned by different institutions or individuals therefore frequently raised tensions over the ownership of the couples' children. For instance, Tosan Academy contended with the state postal station in Mangch'ang over the ownership of slaves in 1801. A female slave of Tosan Academy married Kim Han'gi (d.u.), a slave at the Mangch'ang station, and they had two daughters. According to the three petitions presented by the station slaves to the magistrate's office in 1801, one daughter had served the station and the other the academy. However, the head slave of Tosan Academy came over one day and claimed that both of them should work for the academy.⁹¹ The magistrate's office immediately ordered the Mangch'ang station to submit supporting documents, and they provided the household registry for Kim Han'gi. The copy of Kim's household registry was again forwarded to Tosan Academy for their review.⁹² According to the report issued by the magistrate's office (*ch'öpchöng*), it confirmed Kim as a slave belonging to the station and warned Tosan Academy not to encroach upon the station's property.⁹³

Because the slaves composed the major labor force in academies, scholars were also sensitive to local officials' attempts to impose either tax or corvée duties on them. For instance, Tosan Academy presented four *ch'öpchöng* reports over seven years to the governor's office in Andong to protest the military duties imposed upon one of its slaves, Kim Ch'isön (d.u.).⁹⁴ On some occasions, the academy and slaves orchestrated protests against state offices. One was about the cotton tax levied on a female slave, as the magistrate's office misclassified her as a shaman practitioner. This slave presented a *soji* petition to complain about the unfair tax. According to the partly

damaged official decision, however, the magistrate's office refused to rectify the case.⁹⁵ In six years, an academy staff member submitted a short report (*komok*) of only one sentence to the magistrate's office to request that this slave be exempt from the cotton tax. The magistrate's decision written on this report says that it examined the roster of slaves in Tosan Academy and confirmed this slave's name there; this made it clear that the cotton tax levied on her would be retracted.⁹⁶ Both academy scholars and slaves themselves were involved in the textual practices in various administrative genres in order to negotiate with the state authorities. It is notable that the petition presented by this female slave was written in literary Chinese, and the skillful calligraphic style shows that it must have been written by someone very well versed in literary Chinese classics. Although it was illegal, it was not impossible to submit petitions drafted in vernacular Korean on local levels, as local governments officially recognized such petitions during the late Chosŏn period.⁹⁷ Although the absence of further sources prevents us from discovering the exact ways this particular text was written and presented, the slaves seem to have been closely interacting with the academy staff to pin down the tax issues, as a smooth resolution was beneficial for both parties. The academy staff could have written this petition on behalf of the slave. Another possibility, although very slim, is the slave's literacy in literary Chinese. For whatever reasons, some men and women from humble origins could read and write literary Chinese during the Chosŏn dynasty. Among the texts preserved in Tosan Academy, six procuratorial letters (*p'aeji*) confirm this. These literary Chinese documents state that the head slave of Tosan Academy was entrusted to sell or transfer academy lands for various purposes.⁹⁸ Considering the significance of the tasks, it is not far-fetched to presume that the head slaves were proficient enough in literary Chinese to deal with such transactions, in which they would have had to handle various official documents.

Mastery in the production, archiving, and retrieval of various official documents, day-to-day duties for academy scholars, figured prominently in the quasi-official function of academies as the intermediary between the state authorities and other social actors. This new textual culture spread and also affected the social life of countryside literati. The publication of genealogies by major lineage groups in the Yŏngnam area mainly took place in the late sixteenth century, when the newly established academies enshrined the notable ancestors of these clans.⁹⁹ In other words, the local academy

movement induced the elite families to put together and organize information about their ancestry and kinship boundary, for which expertise in documentation held vital significance. The skill sets developed in local academies to administer various texts could carry over to reorganizing the elite lineage groups in the sixteenth century.

More important, most of the administrative documents fall into the broad category of epistolary genres. The administration of local academies consisted mostly of letters received, the decisions made based upon these letters, and outgoing letters. The official decision documents frequently took letter form because the decisions were mostly communicated in letters. The use of epistolary formats for administrative documents was not uncommon in other parts of the world. For example, Dutch archives show that simple governing bodies in the Netherlands often communicated their decisions through letters, and the draft versions of outgoing letters functioned as the official documents. The incoming letters and the draft decision-cum-outgoing letters together formed the “verbaalarchief,” which was “one long continuous series of draft decisions, arranged by the date the decisions were taken.”¹⁰⁰ The epistolary protocols in ancient Greek society and premodern Islamic society, likewise, regarded stylistic eloquence and administrative prose as indivisible components.¹⁰¹ Even after the development of modern state governance, administrative correspondence has been important in government and politics, as shown in the scandal of Hillary Clinton’s e-mails in contemporary American politics.

Natalie Zemon Davis cogently showed that ordinary supplicants in sixteenth-century France harnessed whatever textual and discursive means were available in drafting their remission letters to persuade the king or courts, which made these letters a mixed genre.¹⁰² Writing good letters enabled social actors to have access to and communicate with state authorities. Likewise, the Chosŏn official documents and reports required both officials and nonofficial participants to communicate effectively in writing. Such skill was even more necessary in creating the petitionary documents through which citizens tried to persuade the state authorities. The practice of letter writing before the introduction of “preprinted blank forms” for government usage delivered powerful political connotations, as it manifested the writing subjects’ capability to command the blank sheets of paper.¹⁰³ Mastering versatile usages of letter writing ideally equipped Chosŏn literati with the essential political tool—administrative literacy.

Social Epistolary Genres and Political News

THE local academy movement created various sociopolitical repercussions beyond their educational and moral effects. Synchronizing their scholarship by reading and learning from the same Confucian classics, following the tutelage of the same teachers, practicing and answering the same questions, learning about the same great men, discussing the same ideas, practicing the same rituals, and worshipping the same Confucian worthies fostered the cohesiveness of the community formed around local academies.¹ This networking process also allowed rural literati to trade and synchronize their ideas about social issues and political problems. In other words, diverse interactions in local academies offered them optimal circumstances in which to rally together to generate sociopolitical influence. The nonpolitical experiences shared among academy scholars could inspire similar methods for their political activism.² The forms of their collective political actions drew on the identities, social connections, and organizational patterns that shaped the everyday interactions in local academies.³ Ultimately academy scholars constituted a distinct social group, which took up local leadership and raised their voices in national political discourses.

The habitual correspondence among academy scholars generated a new type of networking between the master and his disciples and among academically like-minded scholars, which remarkably expanded the scope of their social interchanges beyond their existing ties with family members and local acquaintances. As a pragmatic genre, letters were also instrumental for

handling various practical problems and negotiating conflicts. Effective communicative practices made it easier to mobilize people or to pool resources for collective actions. The versatile applications of letters for diverse purposes brought academy scholars together into a network in which they deliberated on their new self-identity as both opinion leaders in local societies and beacons of Neo-Confucian moral principles on the national stage.

The formation of this new sociotextual community allowed academy scholars to communicate as a group with other scholar groups in different regions through correspondence. For this purpose, they began to experiment with collective epistolary genres such as circular letters. The academies in different areas thus formed a supraregional communication network. The overlap between cohesive interpersonal networks at the local level and expansive epistolary networks at the regional level facilitated the circulation and spread of political news and various opinions about it. Moreover, nonofficial literati passed around court newsletters through their personal epistolary networks. As the news networks overlapped with and intersected with the group communication around local academies, political information and opinions traversed local and regional communities. An epistolary nexus developed around local academies, which had become hubs of scholarly networking. Therefore, enrolling at an academy enlisted rural scholars in the new information network. The social epistolary genres not only enhanced dyadic connections between local literati but also improved their ability to disseminate political information to wide audiences. This new pattern of communication, encompassing bilateral conversations and wide dissemination of information, could bind nationwide scholars together as a single community concurrently sharing the same political discourses.⁴

The proliferation of epistolary practices enabled local literati to address, synchronize, and propagate their ideas about society and politics with ease. This sparked the political activism of rural scholars, who were armed with new philosophical and ethical languages that they mastered from Neo-Confucian texts such as Zhu Xi's letters. The interplay of individual, local, and regional communications made enrolling in local academies a crucial part of the literati's social identity and political orientation. Not only as centers of epistolary culture but also as physical spaces for meeting, the academies provided the perfect conditions for the politicization of nonofficial rural scholars. In this new social and communicative setting, some of these scholars' political passions became promising influences on government and viral in the speed and range at which they spread. The growth of local academies

and their alliance on regional and national levels changed the political relationship between the Chosŏn state and nonofficial rural scholars.

GROUP COMMUNICATION THROUGH CIRCULAR LETTERS (*T'ONGMUN*)

The rise of local academies as the central educational institutions across the country increased the social interactions among scholar groups in different areas. Therefore, the use of circular letters proliferated. This letter form facilitated exchanging information among members of a group and between groups. Although it is unknown when Korean people began to use these letters, they became popular among scholars starting in the mid-sixteenth century, when local academies became the center of the literati's interactions. One of the main functions of this utilitarian epistolary genre was to inform group members of the time and place of an upcoming meeting, the agenda to be discussed, and other details including penalties for tardiness or absence.⁵ Academy scholars also used circular letters to cover a variety of subjects, including local rituals, publication of scholarly writing or genealogies, and exemplary moral cases.⁶ Because state government offices did not use circular letters, this form allowed literary elites to build horizontal communications in a separate discursive space.

With no official postal system in Chosŏn, circular letters were usually delivered by slaves owned by academies, state schools, or local elites.⁷ Considering that most remaining circular letters are preserved in the academies or kinship organizations that received them, we could assume that the members of recipient institutions read the circular letters communally, either through reading aloud or posting them in public. It is also possible that the academies or kinship organizations passed around the circular letters that they had received to their respective members. After making a full round, the original circular letters could have been returned to the institutions and filed there. The members also transcribed the letters into multiple copies for easier and faster circulation.⁸

Most importantly, local literati frequently utilized circular letters to publicize their opinions about certain political issues in the regional or national scholarly communities.⁹ They used circular letters extensively to coordinate collective activism against state authorities.¹⁰ When they decided to rally together as a group to protest state policies, they normally elected drafters (*chet'ong*), copiers (*sat'ong*), and dispatchers (*palt'ong*) of circular letters to

facilitate their group communication.¹¹ The systematic production and circulation of circular letters enabled nonofficial regional scholars to orchestrate their opinions while reinforcing their solidarity with one another. This new communicative mode encouraged academy scholars from different regions to join together and raise their collective voice on national issues at the political center. Moreover, the political usage of this genre connected them to capital scholars enrolled in the Royal Academy. In late Chosŏn political culture, it became the custom for these capital scholars to pass around circular letters to local academies across the country when they presented memorials to the throne on certain political issues. This was not simply to spread the news about their political activism but to urge scholars nationwide to join in.¹² In this way, the political use of circular letters fostered collaboration among diverse groups through the diffusion of information, which subsequently sparked “new coordination.”¹³ This new coordination could prompt nationwide campaigns to press the king and court ministers on political claims. The effective spread of political opinions and coordination of local scholarly communities through circular letters shifted the scale of rural scholars’ political activism from local and regional grievances to national mobilization.

It was not just Chosŏn scholars who utilized this efficient group communication for political changes. Circular letters played a crucial role in the American Revolution, as American Patriots emerged as an influential counterweight to the Loyalists and British government. For instance, Samuel Adams, in his essays published in the *Boston Gazette* in 1771, foregrounded Massachusetts’s initiative in sending “circular letters” to assemblies of other colonies as the decisive means to successfully resist increasingly oppressive colonizers. One year later, he proposed and made the first motion to institutionalize the Boston Committee of Correspondence, which all the other colonies emulated soon after. Not only did the committee sustain two-way correspondence with all towns across Massachusetts, but it also extended the same correspondence to the political centers of other colonies. The Committees of Correspondence across the thirteen colonies rallied opposition on common causes and coordinated collective actions, which fueled the spirit of revolution.¹⁴ In both the late Chosŏn and colonial America, the effective group communication circulating political voices tied the people together so that they acted collectively to shatter the existing power structures.

Circular letters were also frequently used as main references in the decision-making process. The letter in figure 5.1, which had been kept in

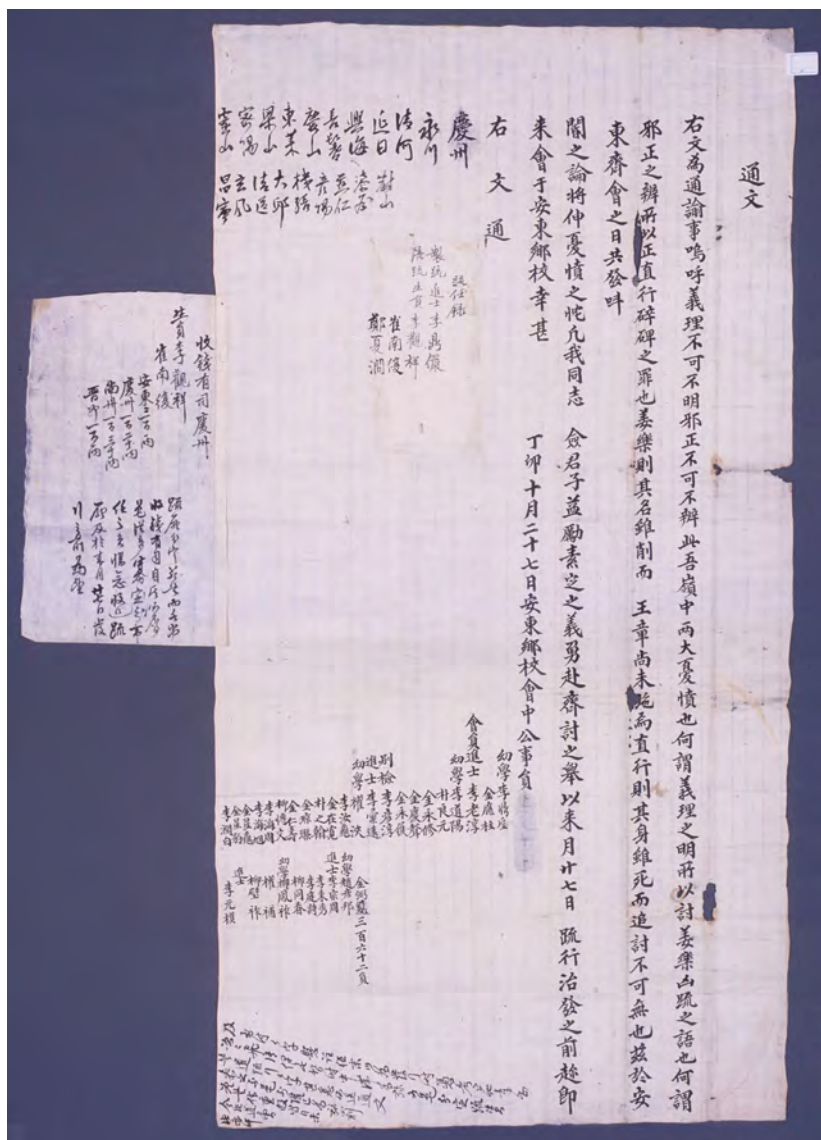


FIGURE 5.1. Circular letter (1807) that scholars from the Andong State School sent out to scholar groups of twenty prefectures in the Yŏngnam area. 124×86 cm. Photo courtesy of the Jangseogak Archives at the Academy of Korean Studies (entrusted by Kyŏngju Ijo Kyŏngju Ch'oe-sŏ Ch'oe Ch'illip chongga).

Yongsan Academy in Kyōngju, was sent out by Andong scholars in 1807 to scholar groups of twenty prefectures in the Yōngnam area. It calls upon scholars to present a memorial to the throne in order to refute the joint memorial presented in 1801 by 490 other Yōngnam scholars. This joint memorial claimed that the de facto instigator of a failed rebellion in 1800 was Ch'ae Hongwŏn (1762–?).¹⁵ Ch'ae was an adopted son of Ch'ae Chegong (1720–1799), the central political figure of the Namin faction supported by the Yōngnam T'oegye school. Although the sources do not indicate what the main issues were, it seems that the Andong scholars considered that this joint memorial, defaming a political dignitary connected to their group, significantly undermined their reputation on the national political stage.

The textual and material traces left on this circular letter reveal how scholars actually engaged in this particular case. At least three different pieces of information indicate that this letter was retrieved and referred to as a decision document after its initial function as a communicative tool. First, the note in pale ink at the upper center, added right below the prefectures to which the letter was addressed, lists one scholar as the drafter of the memorial (*cheso*) and three others as its dispatchers to the royal court (*paeso*). Considering the contents of this circular letter, which simply called for a meeting, the names of these four scholars elected to draft and deliver the memorial must have been put down during the meeting held as the result of its circulation. The document indicates that the participants brought this particular circular letter along and revisited its contents during their discussion. The slanted text added to the bottom offers the second piece of information.¹⁶ This note jotted down in cursive writing urges the participating scholars to disregard the routine process of commenting on and annotating the memorial drafts to save time. It warns that the circulation of drafts via circular letters might substantially delay their plan, if each prefecture held on to them even briefly. This delay would bog down their political mobilization as a whole.¹⁷ The note ends by pointing out that they have to complete drafting the memorial during the meeting, no matter what. Lastly, a small piece of paper attached later to the left side of the original letter lists two Kyōngju scholars elected as money collectors (*sujŏn yusa*) for the funds that would be used to travel to Seoul to present the memorial to the throne. It also lists four prefectures and the amount of money that they donated. The cursive note below them states that money collectors in each prefecture should solicit as many donations in each prefecture as they could and bring them to the meeting called for in the original circular letter. This small

addendum must have been written between the delivery of the circular letter to Kyŏngju and the meeting on the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh month of 1807 at Andong Local School. The scholars in Yongsan Academy could have glued this piece to the original circular letter to provide comprehensive information about this particular political mobilization. These traces left on the original circular letters testify that nonofficial rural scholars retrieved, deliberated on, and filed letters originally used for communicative purposes for their collective actions. Moreover, the contents added in various stages of collaboration among local literati show that the serious political messages were interwoven with the administrative and logistical planning to make them materialize. Chosŏn circular letters not only disseminated and exchanged scholar groups' radical ideas but also morphed them into actual political actions by facilitating the deliberation process for political coordination.

DIFFUSION OF POLITICAL INFORMATION THROUGH COURT NEWSLETTERS (*CHOBO*)

The exchanges of political opinions among rural scholars through circular letters hinged upon the availability of reliable political information. In Chosŏn society, educated male elites mostly collected information about court politics from court newsletters. It remains unknown when such newsletters came into use. However, records of them began to appear in the early fifteenth century. The Office of the Royal Secretariat made various political facts available in news sources every day, including royal edicts, court debates, personnel changes in the government, local news reported to the court, and the contents of the memorials submitted to the king along with his responses to them. Clerks dispatched from discrete government ministries and offices of provincial governors or local magistrates (*kibyŏl sŏri*) transcribed this information into the form of newsletters. In principle, these were distributed only to government offices.¹⁸ According to many *sillok* records, court ministers frequently referred to the information that they collected from the newsletters in debating political issues with the king and other officials. In this respect, the court newsletters seem to have been designed to keep incumbent officials updated on major political and administrative issues. However, much evidence shows that officials forwarded them to their family members and friends as well as ex-officials. The details

about state politics trickled down to the society through personal connections among male elites and scholarly social networks.

The court newsletters outside of official sectors were widely circulated, quite often copied, and frequently read in turn among male elites. With no systematic mechanism for the distribution of news, the Chosŏn literati took advantage of existing epistolary networks to circulate newsletters. Male elites frequently sent them as attached documents along with their letters to family members, friends, and colleagues.¹⁹ Such a delivery amounted to a kind of gift, as news marked the most pursued commodity in communication before the age of mass media. Letters with newsletters included thus helped cement the relationship between sender and addressee.²⁰ The delivery of letters to the intended recipients frequently did not mean the end of their functions. The demand for news among educated elites made the recipients of letters that came with court gazettes the local sources from which political information diffused. In the epistolary culture of eighteenth-century Islamic Eurasia, the recipient of letters with diverse news was “one of the principal threads in the information fabric of the region.”²¹ Letter writing thus provided a service like modern newspapers by reporting on and gathering various events happening at a distance. This accords with the pattern of news circulation in early America, where “the very concept of newspaper was rooted in letter writing.”²² The detailed accounts in the letters were considered much more reliable than the oral news because they would not be corrupted over long distances.²³ The news conveyed through correspondence, however, frequently carried over to the oral network. The integration of the preexisting epistolary network and the distribution routes of news easily engendered elaborate debates on contemporary political issues in correspondence among male elites. The circulation of political news thus commonly accompanied the metadiscourse about it.²⁴

In the Chosŏn political communicative system, the king was expected to respond to all memorials presented to him. Hence, summaries of the memorials submitted by both court ministers and nonofficial scholars appeared in court newsletters along with the royal responses. Nonofficial scholarly communities thus found court newsletters extremely useful, because access to them allowed rural scholars to keep abreast of the current court debates as well as how scholarly communities across the country reacted to them. By reading these newsletters, rural scholars were no longer excluded from the national political discourse. Moreover, they knew that if they joined the

political debates, their voices, expressed in their memorials to the king, could reach the literati nationwide via court gazettes. Likewise, the Patriots before the American Revolution recognized that what they said, did, and wrote would be reprinted in the newspapers and circulated across the colonies. This understanding also shaped what they actually said, did, and wrote.²⁵ Their opinions attained political validity when they were published on a mass scale through new printing technologies. People formed a reading public who used these printed materials, which subsequently brought about the rise of public discourse and the formation of a republican polity in eighteenth-century America.²⁶ Because the dissemination of political news in the Chosŏn period relied on private epistolary networks, the appearance of scholar groups' memorials in court newsletters did not reach the whole society in the same way. Nevertheless, male elites were able to form a single political community as they came to know that other scholar groups in different regions were deliberating on the same problems and often making similar claims.

The wide dissemination of political news also led the kings and court ministers to reconsider the relationship between court politics and social discourses. Most important, some ministers began to regard the court debates and state policies as public information. One *sillok* record from 1706 shows that scholar-officials in the Office of the Royal Secretariat claimed that no information should be excluded from the contents of court newsletters.²⁷ This starkly contrasted with the idea of politics as the exclusive triangular interaction among the monarch, court ministers, and censorial officials, which had been dominant during the early Chosŏn period. This new idea was reconfirmed in 1724, when Yi Kwangjwa (1674–1740) raised concern about not including the details of court decisions in court newsletters. Although Kim Tongp'il (1678–1737) attempted to refute Yi by arguing that it was unprecedented to include all state policies in court newsletters, Yi, in tandem with Sim Tan (1645–1730), made it clear that every single piece of information about court discussions should be made available. In responding to this issue, King Yŏngjo (r. 1724–1776) revealed a somewhat ambivalent stance. He stated that even if it could be problematic not to make all information available in court newsletters, this was still a decision to be made by the officials in the Office of the Royal Secretariat. Then, he implicitly deemphasized the newsletters' significance as central news media by ordering the summaries of court decisions to be posted there while all details were recorded in the *Daily Record of the Office of the Royal Secretariat*

(Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi).²⁸ Yŏngjo could have considered the unfiltered flow of political information into society as a potential threat to national security. In fact, many kings sometimes ordered certain court discussions not to be included in the newsletters for fear of leaking national secrets to foreigners.²⁹ His emphasis on the government record-keeping system over court gazettes, moreover, suggests that he intended to put the state authority at the center of information management. Some Chosŏn kings were also concerned about their own images appearing in these newsletters. Many *sillok* records contain the king's requests not to include in court newsletters certain remarks made by him, which we can find by dint of court historians' meticulous recording habits.³⁰ These examples show that court newsletters were effective in spreading political news to the broader society to the extent that political actors in the royal court had to take readers' responses into account.

There had always existed a demand for political news among the intellectuals, and in 1577, some Seoul residents began to sell printed versions of the court newsletters.³¹ Both government officials and nonofficial intellectuals welcomed these due to their timely supply of political news as well as their readability compared to the often-illegible existing newsletters in extremely cursive writing. After three months, however, King Sŏnjo punished those involved and prohibited the selling of news, fearing the privatization of history writing and the leakage of state secrets.³² The state regulation of printed gazettes, instrumental in initiating political debates, shows that the political elites were wary of the uncontrolled dissemination of news.

There were clear differences between hand-copied and printed newsletters in terms of their political implications. First, the practice of hand-copying court newsletters in the Chosŏn dynasty left the political news open to editing, paraphrasing, truncating, and restructuring by multiple hands. As explained above, the Office of the Royal Secretariat provided only news sources, with no finalized language to be used in newsletters. It was the responsibility of each clerk dispatched from discrete ministries and regional governors' offices to select news that would be of interest to their superior officials, edit it and paraphrase the language of news sources, then copy it into the form of newsletters. Final versions produced from the same news sources could take multiple forms depending on the different interests of government offices and the personal discretion of each clerk.³³ Repackaging and restructuring news took place again in the process of disseminating gazettes through personal epistolary networks.³⁴ It is possible that these

newsletters were copied for second and third rounds while being circulated, which could have involved secondary and tertiary editing processes. The dissemination of news in handwritten forms thus produced myriad different narratives on the same political information.

In contrast, printed newsletters would circulate uniform political news to the general public, which left little leeway for people to edit or manipulate it.³⁵ In addition to the widespread dissemination of news through mass production and enhanced legibility, printed newsletters could have bound the reading public together as a single community sharing the same political information. Moreover, they could reach an anonymous readership including nonelites, political dissidents, and even foreigners, as King Sŏnjo feared. From the perspective of the state authorities, this could have created quite alarming social conditions. In early modern Europe, the anonymity of the purchasers of printed newsletters starkly differed from “scribal journalism,” which served only select and known clients. This is why the English Crown in the 1620s and 1630s did not censor handwritten newsletters, whose elite readership reassured the state authorities.³⁶ Some recent studies, however, claim that handwritten newsletters and printed newspapers had more in common, in terms of content, clientele, and circulation, than has commonly been assumed. The rise of the news media was not necessarily a print phenomenon.³⁷ We can also observe this connection between printed newsletters and hand-copied versions in late Qing China. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Chinese *Capital Gazette* (Jingbao), a daily report of court business, was printed by several different publishers. The report was mostly consumed by officials and provincial readers who could afford the regular subscription. However, it was also common for readers with less means to rent the printed copies at a reduced price. More importantly, many people continued to read abridged versions hand-copied from printed gazettes. Instead of separate news networks formed through imprints and manuscripts, both the contents and the material conditions of newsletters remained interconnected in nineteenth-century China. Contrary to the case of early modern England, moreover, the hand-copied gazettes were consumed by the readers at the margins of political power.³⁸

Top-echelon political elites in Korea persisted in reading handwritten newsletters until the collapse of the Chosŏn dynasty, in spite of the availability of various printed newspapers since the late nineteenth century.³⁹ The emergence of print media in Korea was more complicated than in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, in that they functioned as the

primary means to disseminate new Western ideas aiming to level social stratification. The choice between handwritten and printed newspapers thus corresponded to the division between the ruling class and the ruled. The elite class could have wanted a version of news customized only for them, unlike modern newspapers consumed by the anonymous masses.⁴⁰ Their monopoly on certain kinds of news distinguished traditional political elites from the mass readership of modern newspapers, manifesting and reinforcing the premodern social divisions. The disappearance of handwritten newsletters roughly coincided with the beginning of Japanese colonial rule, under which the Chosŏn social hierarchy was no longer relevant.

COLLECTIVE ACTIVISM THROUGH THE MEMORIAL SYSTEM

The diffusion of political news through court newsletters heightened rural scholars' political consciousness. However, the availability of this information did not automatically prompt them to engage in meaningful political action. They needed to deliberate on the issues that concerned them to coordinate collective responses. This transition from knowing to acting required structured mobilization based upon organizational resources. In fact, the new scholarly identities and social interactions developing in academy networks shaped both the scholars' political claims and the modes of collective action they took. They were well aware that their political voices could reach nationwide literati if they submitted memorials, the news of which would spread through court newsletters. Rural scholars realized that their political imaginaries were not simply daydreams. Sharing and confirming them with other academy scholars through the new networking process and communicative methods allowed them to materialize these ambitions as a feasible political agenda. Motivated by the new political environment demanding the Confucian moral norm, rural scholars ventured onto the national stage starting in the mid-sixteenth century. The result was an exponential increase in collective political protests by nonofficial literati through joint memorials and the nationwide dissemination of news about this kind of political activism, which incited other scholar groups in different regions to get involved. This pattern of collective activism characterized the political culture of late Chosŏn Korea.

Memorials to the throne (*sangso*), which were institutionalized during the Koryŏ dynasty, constituted a major channel of written communication

between the ruler and Confucian elites.⁴¹ Memorials discussed national policies, presented moral admonitions, or offered advice on perfecting royal virtue. At the beginning of the Chosŏn dynasty, the memorials presented by nonofficial scholars were not generally accepted by the court. In the midst of the power struggle between the monarch and the court ministers, however, the window for political participation opened for nonofficial literati. Some early Chosŏn monarchs tried to counter strong court ministers by embracing the political views of nonofficial scholars.⁴² In 1492, King Sŏngjong (r. 1467–1494) officially permitted the participation of nonofficial scholars in state politics through the memorial system.⁴³ In most cases, however, only scholars affiliated with the Royal Academy, who had passed the preliminary state examinations and thus were considered potential officials, used this new political avenue. Ever since King Injong (r. 1544–1545) had encouraged these Royal Academy scholars to express their opinions about political issues, their memorials had attained political authority equal to that of memorials presented by censorial officials.⁴⁴ With the rise of Neo-Confucian moral philosophy, these scholars felt it their obligation to criticize court decisions or comment on the social morale through memorials based upon Confucian ethical norms.

This new channel for political participation, however, did not immediately empower the scholars in the Royal Academy. Many established scholar-officials disapproved of their political role. For instance, T'oegye declared that passing around circular letters to present memorials was not what sensible Confucian scholars would do.⁴⁵ In order to elude this sort of opprobrium, these scholars innovated a mechanism for collective activism to maximize their political influence. When they found some political issues against their interests or the Confucian ethical norms, they held meetings to decide on collective action. Once they agreed that they needed to act against the court decisions, they first refused to sign the dining hall roster (*kwŏndang*). Because this roster was used to make sure the scholars met the attendance requirement to sit in the civil service exams, their refusal to sign it signaled their relentlessness, even to the point of risking their future careers.⁴⁶ When this happened, the officials of the Royal Academy attempted to persuade the scholars to return to their studies. If the scholars persisted, the situation was reported to the headmaster (*taesasŏng*) and the assistant director (*tongjisa*) of the Royal Academy. These high-ranking officials met with the scholars and asked them to submit reports about the causes of their protests. The headmaster drafted his own draft report (*ch'ŏgi*) to the king

based upon the scholars' testimonies. Upon the receipt of the royal response, the headmaster forwarded it to the scholars and urged them to return to their normal activities. If the scholars were not satisfied with the royal response, they sometimes even withdrew from the dorms (*kongjae*) in further protest.⁴⁷ Other means of protest included retreating to the village adjacent to the Royal Academy after paying homage to the Confucian Shrine (*paesa*) and retreating to their hometowns (*hwanhyang*).⁴⁸ These performative protests, however, received persistent criticism that these scholars habitually submitted memorials and staged demonstrations whenever their opinions were not counted in court decisions.⁴⁹ Throughout the Chosŏn dynasty, the Royal Academy scholars continued to deploy these ritualized performances along with circular letters and the submission of memorials.⁵⁰ These systematic political performances, which required well-organized group actions, attest that successful collective mobilization was never easy.

The news about collective political mobilization by Royal Academy scholars was readily available to scholars across the country via court newsletters and word of mouth. The protesters in Seoul also publicized their political contentions across the country through circular letters. Considering that it took more than a century for Royal Academy scholars to legitimize their political participation, however, it must have been even more difficult for nonofficial rural scholars to join in. Therefore, it was not enough for them just to have access to political news and imitate others' political triumphs. Their success on the national stage relied on well-organized cooperation, which was intended to culminate in an impressive vision of the stunning number of participants and their solidarity as a group, their moral worthiness, and their awe-inspiring commitment to their political cause.

When a group of rural scholars agreed that they should submit a joint memorial on a certain issue, they first sent out circular letters to other scholar groups in the region to publicize their opinions while calling for a meeting to plan collective actions. The circular letters traveled through local academies, local schools, and clan organizations that rural scholars frequented. In the meeting that followed, the participants elected members to the committee that would manage various issues concerning the production and submission of joint memorials. The committee members also set up a headquarters (*soch'ŏng*) in either a local academy or a local school. In most cases, the members drafted the memorial and collected signatures from regional scholars. However, in some cases that demanded profound understanding of Confucian theories or writing skills, they solicited various drafts

from leading scholars of the region. After all the signatures were collected,⁵¹ a group of scholars (*paeso*) delivered the memorial to Seoul in order to present it to the throne. The travel expenses were generally donated voluntarily, but regional scholars were sometimes compelled to share the cost. When the *paeso* scholars arrived in Seoul, they submitted their memorial to the Office of the Royal Secretariat. The officials reviewed the memorial, and upon their approval, the summary was presented to the king (*tŭngch'öl*). If they deemed the contents of joint memorials inappropriate for royal review, they often refused to forward the memorials to the throne. In some other cases, the consideration of factional interests also influenced their decisions. It always had been an onerous task for rural scholars to pass this administrative hurdle and make their opinions heard by both the king and the scholarly community across the country. Although the court ministers initially inspected the contents of memorials, the king actually decided whether or not certain memorials would be accepted. If he responded positively, the petitioners were informed of it and sometimes given royal prizes to be used to travel back home. If the king considered the contents of the memorial a challenge to royal authority or believed it would incite political turmoil with ungrounded or seditious rumors, however, the memorial presenters could be interrogated and punished. The leaders of petitioning scholar groups were quite often suspended from the civil service examinations, and at worst, they were sent into exile. Finally, the summaries of the memorials and the royal responses appeared in the court newsletters. Rural scholars could make their political voices heard across the country by presenting joint memorials, regardless of the results. They had good reasons to take the trouble to organize diverse scholar groups and risk the punishments.⁵²

In the late sixteenth century, when rural scholars began to express their political opinions, joint memorials unanimously called for the dissemination of Confucian moral values and the honoring of past Confucian worthies consistently across the country. The scholarly identity newly emerged around local academies dominated the discursive repertoire of collective political activism in this period. The rise of diverse scholarly groups in different localities and the subsequent division of their political voices beginning in the seventeenth century, however, undercut the political effects of their collective textual practices. Some local academies forged close ties with the political factions in the central government on the basis of academic, regional, or kinship connections. The factions took advantage of the nationwide proliferation of academies by embracing academy scholars as their


supporting group. Likewise, local elites pursued opportunities via this new political avenue. These alliances subsequently affected the court's decisions on granting official charters to local academies.⁵³ The connection with metropolitan elites also entailed changes in academy organization. Many academies appointed high-ranking court ministers or local magistrates as their headmasters.⁵⁴ As a result, massive amounts of political information traveled back and forth between the capital and the countryside; various regional scholarly communities participated in multilateral political communication across the country. Through their involvement in local academies, rural scholars could create a vertical connection to political elites in the royal court while building and reinforcing the horizontal networks in their regional bases.⁵⁵ This political identity forged through the connection to government factions began to overshadow the scholarly identity bolstered by Neo-Confucian moral philosophy. The changed political topography also shaped the contents of rural scholars' joint memorials. Whereas remonstrating memorials decreased, requesting and impeaching memorials skyrocketed in this period.⁵⁶ The divisive voices in rural scholars' memorials made their collective activism no longer effective, as the kings spurned the memorials as malicious products of factional strife. The factional alliances between the political elites in the court and their local cohorts melted away the moral authority of their collective voices.

At the height of factionalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, therefore, some court ministers condemned the uncontrolled increase of local academies. For example, Im Tam (1596–1652) proposed that the establishment of new academies be approved by the Ministry of Rites in his memorial presented in 1644.⁵⁷ In 1657, Sŏ P'irwŏn (1614–1671) echoed Im's claim, and the royal court ordered the immediate implementation of this proposal.⁵⁸ Sŏ, in this memorial, specifically brought up four drawbacks of local academies. First, the popularity of academies made the state schools even more neglected. Second, academy scholars routinely dodged military duties. Third, the selection of past worthies for academy rituals frequently created controversies and hassles in the local communities. Last, the state support for academy rituals imposed too much financial burden upon local magistrates.⁵⁹ In short, the academies encroached upon the sites where the state was supposed to take control—"hegemony over orthodox education," "appropriation of taxable manpower," and "the selection of worthy individuals for enshrinement."⁶⁰ The uncontrolled proliferation of local academies, which was possible due to the tight connection between rural elites and

political factions in the capital, significantly undermined state authority across the society. Starting in the eighteenth century, the Chosŏn court aspired to restore state control. In 1714, the court again decreed that the local academies established without the government's approval should be abolished.⁶¹ The Chosŏn court reconfirmed this regulation in 1741 by abolishing about 180 academies founded after 1714 without its approval.⁶² Despite the continued efforts at regulation, rural scholars doggedly appropriated academy networks to buttress their sway in both local societies and the national political arena. The state policy thus culminated in the abolition of all but forty-seven major academies in 1873.⁶³

Although nonofficial literati learned and restaged the repertoires of political performance developed in the mid-sixteenth century throughout the late Chosŏn period, these methods no longer yielded the desired political effects due to all these state efforts to curb their political empowerment. The rural scholarly communities had to figure out how to rejuvenate their collective political participation through joint memorials, the subject of the next chapter.

Contentious Performances in Political Epistolary Practices

 ONCE rural scholars began to raise their voices collectively, most scholar-officials remained reluctant to acknowledge these new political actors for fear of losing their sway over court debates. They institutionalized oppressive review processes for nonofficial scholars' memorials to keep their political ambitions under control. The diminished effects of joint memorials led the petitioning scholars to add performative aspects to their collective mobilization. Nonofficial scholars focused on visualizing their worthiness, unity, number, and commitment in the public space.¹ They also elevated the political texts into objects to be respected and venerated rather than merely communicative tools delivering their ideas. This spectacular visualization of activism and texts related to it intensified their political messages. The contentious performances targeted not only the political elites in the royal court but also bystanders at the margins of politics. Successful performances could "turn sympathizers into participants, neutralize opponents, and turn indifferent onlookers into sympathizers."² Even if collective activism did not achieve the intended political goals, it could at least disturb the stability of everyday life. The public space of Chosŏn society frequently became the political stage where these scholars performed their protests and tried to attract attention from the general populace.

The mode of contentious performances, the invention of mid-sixteenth-century Yŏngnam literati, developed into the repertoire of collective activism used for the rest of the dynasty. The mobilization of regional scholars

through social epistolary genres and face-to-face meetings in local academies gave rise to petition drives through joint memorials to the throne. Their travel to and stay in Seoul to present their memorials to the king exhibited their political determination in the forms of such well-organized performances as street marches, wearing matching colors, and sit-ins. The details of all these practices were meticulously chronicled in the form of daily records, which later scholars could scrutinize and use as models for more political protests. Consequently, this mechanism of political activism was inherited and repeated.

When this mode of political mobilization took hold as a protocol for collective activism, most nonofficial scholars tended to use a very few existing claim-making techniques, even when they were no longer effective. Unless there were drastic changes in social life or political conditions, most of them did not abandon the traditional mode of protests. In this respect, the sixteenth-century repertoire of collective activism persisted until the collapse of the Chosŏn dynasty, when Japanese colonial rule uprooted the pre-existing political structures.

Finally, nonofficial scholars added some variations to these existing political performances bit by bit. The most common method was increasing the number of participants, which subsequently enlarged the size of material texts due to the added signatures. The colossal physical form of the memorials along with the massive number of participants applied the traditional repertoires of contentious performances under discrete sociopolitical circumstances. Overall, the changes in political culture that entailed the rise of new epistolary practices in the sixteenth century fashioned the distinctive ways the state and educated elites interacted and negotiated throughout the late Chosŏn period.

THE INVENTION OF CONTENTIOUS PERFORMANCE: THE JOINT MEMORIAL CASE OF 1565

Confucian literati in Chosŏn society played an active role in sociopolitical realms by putting forward their opinions to both the state authorities and the public, even without holding official positions. Their political role was, however, neither granted to them from the beginning of the dynasty nor inclusive of all the lettered population. As discussed, it was only in 1492 that the Chosŏn court allowed nonofficial literati to join in political debates through the memorial system.³ This new political avenue was mainly

dominated by scholars enrolled in the Royal Academy who had passed the preliminary civil service exams and thus were considered potential officials. The proliferation of local academies did provide both institutional settings and communicative measures for the political mobilization of nonofficial scholars. Motivated by the new political environment demanding the implementation of Confucian moral norms, rural scholars ventured onto the national stage with a powerful political tool—joint memorials. Despite attempts to disenfranchise them, their memorials began to outnumber those produced by Royal Academy scholars in the late sixteenth century.⁴

The decisive example of collective contention using joint memorials took place in 1565 and fundamentally transformed the political performances of late Chosŏn literati. A group of scholars from the Yŏngnam area presented a series of joint memorials to request the execution of a Buddhist monk, Pou (1515–1565). Pou had attempted to propagate Buddhist doctrines under the auspices of Queen Dowager Munjŏng (1501–1565), against the will of most Confucian literati. Upon the death of the queen dowager, voices calling for Pou's punishment were raised both inside and outside the royal court. Scholars led by T'oegye's disciple Kim Ugoeng (1524–1590) intensified this issue by instigating scholars from the Yŏngnam area. About three hundred scholars from forty-four prefectures (of the seventy-one in Yŏngnam) eventually joined Kim's group. They submitted joint memorials to King Myŏngjong (r. 1545–1567) a total of twenty-two times over twenty-three days. Scholar groups had presented joint memorials to the throne on political issues previously.⁵ However, this was the first time the collective action of nonofficial rural scholars effectively influenced the political discourse of the capital. The systematic writing practices used in mobilizing rural scholars, the ritualistic and spectacular display of texts in public, and the meticulous recording of the production and presentation of joint memorials distinguish this case.

Kim Ugoeng's diary about this particular political event, *The Daily Record of the Journey to Seoul* (Sŏhaeng ilgi), starts from the third day of the seventh month of 1565. It reads that Kim and his colleagues passed around a circular letter to various scholar groups in the Yŏngnam area beyond his hometown, Sangju, when they decided to express their opinion about Pou's case. On the twenty-third day, about three hundred scholars from all around Yŏngnam got together in Sangju and signed the joint memorial that they had just produced. Although at first many were reluctant to sign it for various reasons, they finally agreed that they shared the same wish to punish Pou.⁶ One day after the production and signing of the joint memorial, the

twenty-fourth day, ten scholars, including Kim, headed for Seoul to present the joint memorial to the throne. Before setting out, they reported their departure to the magistrate. They were sent off with a splendid banquet thrown at the riverbank. They arrived in Andong the next day and met the magistrate and local scholars there. Due to heavy rain, they were forced to stay there for two more days and finally entered Seoul through the Eastern Great Gate (Tongdaemun) after disembarking at the ferry point called Tumop'o in the afternoon of the thirtieth day of the seventh month. On the next day, the first day of the eighth month, they received Seoul scholars as guests, including the famous scholar-official Yi I, while preparing for the presentation of their joint memorial.

From the fifth day of the eighth month on, scholars from various towns in the Yŏngnam area began to arrive in Seoul one after the other in support of Kim's group. Kim's group sent out circular letters to these joining scholars to promote efficacious communication and coordinated group action in Seoul.⁷ Until these scholar groups disbanded to return to their hometowns on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, Kim's group led organized actions through epistolary communication either by having scholars demonstrate outside the royal palace while waiting for the royal response or by arranging the submission of multiple joint memorials simultaneously.⁸ Several scholars residing in Seoul, including Kim's father, supplied the rice, paper, and brushes for Kim's group.⁹ On the eighteenth day of the month, these scholars from various parts of Yŏngnam elected two administrative staff members, because their number had multiplied to the extent that they needed more coordinated actions.¹⁰ The scholars continued to present joint memorials until the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month of 1565, but the king persisted in his decision not to change the punishment for Pou, sending him into exile at Cheju Island.

When their consecutive submissions of joint memorials turned out to be in vain, the scholars made a plan for continued rallies after returning to their hometowns. On the twenty-fourth day of the eighth month, one day before they were to leave Seoul, the Yŏngnam scholars vowed to continue to protest by not taking the upcoming civil service examinations. Each group was asked to spread word of this decision to other scholars who had not joined their actions in Seoul. They also agreed to send out circular letters if they found scholars going against this decision, so that all the groups of the Yŏngnam area could ostracize them from their community.¹¹ After Kim's group left Seoul, some Royal Academy scholars continued the petition drive

for about two weeks on a daily basis, and Pou was finally executed by the governor of Cheju, Pyŏn Hyöp (1528–1590), in the same year.¹²

The Language of Protests

The need to rally together as a group affected the ways scholars produced their memorials. In principle, participating scholars joined their voices and jointly drafted memorials.¹³ In the case of Kim Ugoeng's group, Kim as a leader wrote only five memorials out of twenty-two, and other members contributed the rest. Joint authorship also influenced the language and rhetoric through which the scholars claimed their political authority. Their modes of collective action were closely intertwined with their discursive strategies.¹⁴ The existing drafts written by Kim legitimized their collective activism as representing the Confucian moral norm. One memorial argued that the scholars' political action stemmed from public and impartial opinion (*kongnon*) supported by the whole nation, while labeling the king's reluctance to execute Pou as his private and biased emotion (*sajöng*). Kim made clear that if the king ended up losing the people's hearts by insisting on his prejudiced decision, the destiny of the dynasty would be at risk.¹⁵ In another memorial, Kim argued that the scholars had come to Seoul not simply to request Pou's execution but also to alert the king, who had lost the ability to discern the guidance of Heavenly principle (*ch'ölli*). The Confucian rhetoric stressed the collective worthiness and thus could nullify skepticism about the political activism of rural scholars as inauthentic. More significantly, these terms associated with Confucian classical tradition resonated with the cultural norms that governed the lifestyle of educated elites. Their familiarity with this contentious language made it easy for diverse scholar groups to adopt and repeat it for their various political mobilizations. In this way, the vocabulary for protests, derived from Confucian tradition, maintained durability under disparate political circumstances due to its "symbolic resonance" and "strategic modularity."¹⁶

The emphasis on and frequent usage of *kongnon* indicate two very significant characteristics of contentious politics in late Chosŏn society. First, nonofficial literati did not invent this political rhetoric in the mid-sixteenth century. Scholar-officials had used it in court debates from the beginning of the dynasty. Rural scholars adopted this political lexicon and modified and ritualized it for their collective activism. Remarkably, a keyword search of online *sillok* with this term indicates that about 60 percent of its usage was

in the period from the reign of Sōngjong to that of Sōnjo.¹⁷ The usage of *kongnon* suddenly increased during the reign of Sōngjong when new groups of scholars educated in Neo-Confucianism made their way into court politics. This term was also frequently used during the reign of Chungjong, when it was highlighted that the king and ministers should rule the state together due to his ascension to the throne under the aegis of scholar-officials after deposing his half brother Prince Yōnsan (r. 1494–1506). *Kongnon* best expressed the political ideas that new scholar groups brought into the court debates in this period. This term was most suitable to unite, mobilize, and rally scholars as a powerful political group while suppressing the existing groups. Considering the circulation of court newsletters and subsequent formation of a political forum in the social epistolary interactions among the Confucian literati, nonofficial male elites must have been exposed to and saturated with this language. They appropriated and utilized the rhetoric derived from court politics rather than creating their own terms challenging state authorities. Their political imaginaries were framed by the existing rhetoric and lexicons readily available to them.

However, it is misleading to consider that the adoption of political elites' rhetoric made the rural literati's activism a simple replica of court debates. The key characteristic of enduring contentious words rests upon their "ambiguity." "Words for contentious politics," Sidney Tarrow explicates, "are polysemic. . . . [T]heir ambiguity is part of what makes them modular and therefore available for repetition."¹⁸ In other words, *kongnon* was widely applicable because it could convey many different, sometimes contradictory, connotations. Moreover, this ambiguity fostered political coalitions among groups with diverse backgrounds and goals. *Kongnon* in the Chosōn political culture was vague enough to be modular, so diverse that political actors could co-opt it for their disparate agendas. The ambiguity of this term was embedded in the conditional nature of its definition. Opinions could be legitimized as *kongnon* only when the public regarded them as impartial and harbored no suspicion about the claimants' hidden calculations. If the claimants gained certain profits, however meager, through making their opinions accepted by the state authorities, these opinions did not qualify as *kongnon*. The number of people involved did not guarantee that a given opinion would become *kongnon*. Many people could have championed a certain opinion for the sake of the common good, but it was also possible that they supported it because it would serve their group interests. This is why the king as a single person could sometimes claim his viewpoint as

kongnon while denouncing the opinion of a group of scholar-officials as partisan. As it was generally considered that *kongnon* was derived from all Confucians (*yuja*) irrespective of their official positions,¹⁹ nonofficial scholars might have already considered themselves part of national political discourses even before their collective activism in the mid-sixteenth century. Court ministers, likewise, felt obliged to lead the *kongnon* of the period. Yi I even asserted that the state is ruled when the *kongnon* is in the court; the state is in jeopardy when it comes from the streets.²⁰ For Confucian literati, not to speak out about political problems was self-betrayal, even if speaking out was a crime in the eyes of the state authority. Scholar-officials and non-official literati thus competed over the domination of *kongnon*, which became the keyword of political debates.

Contentious Performances

In addition to using the political rhetoric appropriated from court debates, Kim Ugoeng and his cohorts physically manifested their collectivity by systematically presenting two performances. The local scholarly community placed political texts at the core of their contentious performances rather than regarding them simply as the means for delivering political messages. The send-off banquet thrown for Kim and his associates shows well how Kim's group made use of performative elements to boost the political effects of their collective action. For this event, they set up tents to accommodate all three hundred or so participants.²¹ Kim placed the joint memorial on a high table in one tent. All of them matched their garments by wearing white gowns and white scholar caps, and they stood in two lines, arrayed east and west, facing each other. All these scholars prostrated themselves four times to the memorial, and Kim and the nine scholars who would travel to Seoul placed the joint memorial on a cart. Two slaves pushed this cart forward, and all the scholars bowed to the cart as it passed in front of them. Several local elders advised Kim's group not to use harsh terms while demonstrating their opinions to the throne. Some participants sent them off by composing poems on the spot.²²

The embarkation of the text on its journey brought a festive atmosphere to the local scene, and the number of people and the ritual they performed created extraordinary spectacles. We can assume that the gathering of this large number of scholars on a rural riverbank attracted the attention of the local population. The participants focused on visualizing their number,

unity, and commitment through carefully planned ceremonies. Wearing the same color maximized the visual manifestation of solidarity. The choreographed ritual brought together their opposition to the court decision and authorized their actions. Here, the joint memorial as a political object played the central role. This ceremonial send-off of the text and scholars symbolically transformed the given text into something to be venerated and respected rather than simply a communicative vehicle expressing political dissent. Such special events expanded the connotation of texts beyond objects to be written and read to objects to be performed, watched, and enjoyed. This ritual spectacle designed to dignify the joint memorials elevated textual practices as an integral component of the political culture. The display of political texts, if not of their contents, made public that some literati contended over state political issues and mobilized to make their opinions heard.

Considering that Kim's group notified the local magistrate of their departure for Seoul to present their joint memorials, the royal court could have been informed of the planned presentation as well as the rituals preceding their departure. The king and court ministers could not have ignored the rituals because they displayed both the moral energy of participating scholars and the socioeconomic resources that the local scholarly community had invested in their collective activism. The royal court could also have considered the reaction of local people who had seen the performative rituals. In this way, contentious performances and the dissemination of news about them reinforced the message that the political texts delivered. The addressees had to give a second thought to the political ramifications of the rituals related to joint memorials rather than only directly responding to their rhetoric and contents.

Once the group arrived in Seoul, street marches and demonstrations in urban spaces comprised significant elements of its political performance. According to Kim Ugoeng's daily record, the group took advantage of their procession to the royal palace as an opportunity to create a visual spectacle in public to display their worthiness and commitment. They had an errand boy of the guesthouse, Ongnam, carry the box containing the joint memorial on his shoulders. Two slaves were to hold the box on Ongnam's shoulders, one on each side. Four other slaves drove away those who would block their way with wooden sticks. All the scholars in Kim's group wore black scholar caps and white gowns. In this formation, they marched to the Honghwa Gate of Ch'anggyŏng Palace.²³ This ritualistic parade through the

streets of Seoul must have attracted people's eyes; the presentation of joint memorials by local scholars thus became an issue not only for the king and royal ministers but also for the civilians in Seoul. In this way, although the joint memorials were to be submitted to the throne, the actual interactions bearing on their presentation did not simply take place between demonstrators and the state authority. The onlookers at the margins of protests became more aware because of the political performances that they witnessed. Successful street demonstrations hence induced sympathizers to participate in the proposed political causes, nullified the opposition, and turned indifferent spectators into sympathizers.²⁴

Kim, moreover, sent out circular letters encouraging the group's regional cohorts to come up to Seoul and join the demonstrations. Kim's record mentions about forty towns from which scholar groups went to Seoul, each dispatching about six to seven scholars, but Sŏngju was exceptional in sending seventy scholars.²⁵ The approximate calculation gives about three hundred scholars, so the group was not of a negligible size. Besides presenting joint memorials along with Kim's group, these countryside scholars increased the head count for demonstrations held outside the royal palace while Kim's group presented their memorials and awaited the royal responses. For example, Kim's account on the sixth day of the eighth month reads that scholars from Yonggung, Ch'ŏngdo, and Hamch'ang staged sit-ins outside the royal palace together with Kim's group. This kind of claim-making performance is called *pokhap* or *kyuhon*, which respectively mean prostrating and crying out at the palace gate. The Yŏngnam scholars stayed in Seoul for about twenty days, and their presence and visibility incited concern from both royal ministers and Seoul residents. One comment added by an official historian in the *sillok* entry for the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month articulates that many people became concerned about the agitated situation, because these scholars filled the area outside the royal palace day by day with wrath and rancor.²⁶ As this *sillok* entry indicates, the vehement expression of emotion in public became the centerpiece of demonstrations. Although controlling the public display of emotion offered very effective leverage for male elites to reinforce the social stratification and gender hierarchy, the expression of "just" emotion, such as resentment, immensely enhanced their performances in the political arena.²⁷ The public display of strong emotion shaped the contentious politics, which subsequently prompted other emotions driving the episodes of protests.²⁸ The performative elements combined with the

textual practices increased the chances that the local scholars' presentation of joint memorials would warrant serious review rather than simply being ignored in the bureaucratic structure. The close interaction between the intratextual and extratextual factors that the rural scholars skillfully manipulated empowered them to speak up on state political issues.

Recording the Protests

It is possible to reconstruct the petition drive led by Kim Ugoeng only because he left a meticulous daily record about this particular case. Besides chronicling the progress and the central issues of this mobilization, Kim's record fulfilled various functions under discrete circumstances. By providing a reliable reference, record keeping could help the participating scholars iron out various problems that might arise during the extended period of their collective activism. The record included detailed information about meetings and participants, the main issues they discussed, the resources they mobilized, and plans and actual execution of political performances. It sometimes incorporated drafts of circular letters and joint memorials. This intertextual composition enhanced its reference function.

The recording of protests also historicized the collective activism of rural scholars. Successful political actions would be recorded in the *sillok* by official historians and disseminated across the country through court gazettes. If their political claim did not make its way into the court debates, however, their political rallies would find no place in official history writing. The practice of self-recording made their own political activism indelible, at least in the clan networks or on local levels. This creation of a local history of literati activism also allowed the participants to use their records as political weapons. Some attempted to earn more enthusiastic support from lukewarm participants with their accounts. They sometimes threatened their aloof collaborators that their indifference would be denounced by later scholars who would read their records.²⁹

Besides their utility as political weapons, these records fulfilled quite pragmatic political functions. Such daily records did not simply evoke memories about the ancestors or regional predecessors; they became the manuals for political activism for later scholars. Readers could imitate how their predecessors rallied regional literati for their political causes. In fact, the usage of multilayered political epistolary genres, which Kim's group adroitly manipulated, was immediately adopted by contemporary scholars for

different kinds of claim-making practices. Furthermore, the detailed descriptions of ritualistic gatherings, the interactions with local literati during the travel to Seoul, street marches, and demonstrations in the capital all could become very concrete templates for later political protests. The practice of recording collective activism itself also became an essential political ritual for later scholars, who meticulously studied, copied, and restaged these past precedents for their own purposes. The new mode of political activism developed by Kim Ugoeng's group in the sixteenth century continued to influence collective claim-making practices of nonofficial literati throughout the late Chosŏn period.

LEARNING THE TECHNIQUES OF PROTEST: IMITATING KIM UGOENG'S CASE

Kim Ugoeng's case holds significance in that it was the first occasion when rural scholars' activism had meaningful impact on state politics. His contemporaries thus regarded the ways Kim rallied rural scholars and contended with the state authorities as a precedent for their future political actions. In a letter to Yŏngch'ŏn scholars, Kim Puryun, one of T'oegye's leading disciples, explained that the Yŏngnam scholars' inclination to pass around circular letters and subsequently present joint memorials to the throne stemmed from the success of Kim Ugoeng's group in 1565. Kim Puryun, however, described this political measure negatively, stating that many scholar groups did this whenever people did not accept their opinions.³⁰ This letter demonstrates that the case of 1565 established collective textual practices as an efficacious political mode for Yŏngnam scholars, but not all of them favored it. As other regional scholars restaged this mechanism of claim making for their own causes, it developed into a routine strategy for expressing political opinions.

Established political elites remained skeptical about the rise of nonofficial rural scholars in the national political discourse. Kim Ugoeng's teacher, T'oegye, expressed his concern about the political participation of local scholars. He thus discouraged scholars in his hometown, Yean, and adjacent Andong from participating in Kim's rally. Still, a new kind of activism by nonofficial scholars developed around the local academy network that T'oegye promoted beginning in the late 1540s. This caused suspicion among court ministers. One of T'oegye's letters to his grandson Yi Ando (1541–1584) reveals how scholar-officials understood his new political agenda: "The

letter that I received from Chông T'ak reads that one state councilor said, 'T'oegye easily contacts young scholars in an inappropriate way. The royal court is turbulent nowadays with innumerable memorials because he agitated these scholars to present them.'"³¹ The fact that the young scholars got together as a group around local academies aroused the ministers' concern about the possibilities for collective political action. T'oegye defended himself by emphasizing that he had not encouraged young scholars to engage in political affairs.³² He might have thought that such direct political involvement would cripple his local strategy as a whole.

More significantly, T'oegye considered rural scholars unqualified to participate in state political discourse. One of his letters to Kim Pup'il (1516–1577) commenting on joint memorials by Kim Ugoeng's group reveals his view:

I cannot determine the opinion of Yôngnam scholars on the issue of presenting memorials to the throne. If I may express my erroneous idea, I must emphasize that even all the royal ministers failed to persuade the king, although their account is credible because they clearly understood the course of the event by witnessing and hearing it in person. If this is the case, how can the rural scholars [who cannot see and hear what happens in the royal court in person] know more about the political events [than royal ministers] and thus move the mind of the king? This is why I, as an old official, remain silent on this issue, even though this inactiveness appears inappropriate. However, people thought that I was wrong when I discouraged the scholars of my hometown from joining the petition drive condemning Pou.³³

T'oegye thought that local scholars could not make strong and credible arguments. Their opinions could easily become unsophisticated, impulsive, and inept because they had limited access to information about court politics. He understood negotiation between the king and bureaucrats in the royal court as the only authentic mode of deciding state political issues. Scholars engaged in academic projects in remote localities had nothing to do with the state political discourse.³⁴ However, T'oegye's seemingly passive mode could barely convince even his close disciples. T'oegye's letter to Yi Ando, written in 1565, demonstrates that his disciples, including Yu Chungnyông and Cho Mok (1524–1606), were enormously encouraged by Kim Ugoeng's initiative and therefore exasperated by T'oegye's admonition not to join this affair.³⁵ It was clear that the massive thrust of political voices

through joint memorials could influence the king and ministers to redirect their court decisions, and the effectiveness of this seemingly illegitimate mode of political participation empowered scholar groups outside officialdom to claim their political opinions as just and impartial.

JOINT MEMORIALS RULE!

As the scholarly communities confirmed the effectiveness of joint memorials, they used this means of political participation habitually from the late sixteenth century. In particular, the debates on the issue of enshrining past Confucian worthies in the Royal Confucian Shrine (Munmyo) brought together nationwide scholars to raise a unified voice for over four decades, which culminated in honoring five past scholars in 1610. The appropriation of the existing political rhetoric and persistent voices imposed historicity and moral superiority upon the collective activism of the Confucian literati.

Nonofficial scholars had good reason to unite against the state about ritual issues. From the beginning of the dynasty, Confucian rituals generated crucial symbolic powers to which both the state and the Confucian literati had access. The problem was that the Chosŏn state and the scholarly community shared the same language and rhetoric embedded in Neo-Confucianism but used them for different purposes. For the state, Confucianism offered efficacious ideological devices through which to set social norms dictating people's behavior according to the value system legitimizing the state authority. In tandem with the civil service examination system, the state schools, and legal institutions, state rituals bolstered the Confucian ideology, which was to trickle down to the lower strata of society. The scholarly community, however, had not docilely trained themselves with state-version Confucian norms. Starting in the late fifteenth century, local scholar groups promoted the embodiment of Confucian knowledge as a way of life while presenting multiple interpretations of the Confucian classics, challenging the state orthodoxy. Thus the literati both in and outside of officialdom joined the process of defining the sociopolitical functions of Confucian knowledge. Korean literati were undertaking the task of Confucianization during the first half of the Chosŏn dynasty, in which setting ritual norms held vital significance.³⁶

To make matters more complex, the state and the scholarly communities each had their own ritual sites. The Chosŏn state had enshrined past

Confucian worthies, both Chinese and Korean, at the Royal Confucian Shrine since the beginning of the dynasty in order to reinforce the guiding role of the state in propagating the Confucian culture.³⁷ The state rituals also aimed to maintain the social order and promote the state ideology. Meanwhile, local academies, besides their educational purpose, functioned as sites of Confucian rituals. Academy rituals were designed to inspire scholars to model themselves after the moral and academic virtues of past Confucian worthies. Participation in the rituals, moreover, fostered the sense of community. As in the cases of Yŏngbong and Sŏak Academies, deciding who should be enshrined frequently caused conflicts between local scholars and magistrates because each of them had disparate evaluations of and interests in the given worthy. For this reason, the ritual institutions of the state and the scholarly community did not develop in accord. Worshipping the same figures and using the same Confucian rhetoric for rituals could mean that one side encroached on the legitimacy of the other. The royal court therefore had always kept a close eye on academy rituals by screening the academic and ethical qualifications of those enshrined.³⁸ The state persistently claimed that the enshrinement of disqualified scholars was one reason for regulating the uncontrolled propagation of academies throughout the late Chosŏn period. Likewise, the scholarly community did not let the state freely judge and define the Confucian ritual norms on its own terms.

Competition with the state authority on ritual issues thus led diverse scholarly communities to unite and raise unanimous opinions. The coalition of nationwide scholars continued until 1610, when the Five Confucian Worthies (Ohyŏn) were finally enshrined in the Royal Confucian Shrine. Ever since the *sarim* scholars made their way into court politics, ritual issues had become the site where the king and the scholars debated the sociopolitical role of Neo-Confucian scholarship. These scholars aimed to legitimize their authority by authenticating their academic lineage in the state ritual space. They first distanced themselves from the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn scholar-officials whom their predecessors had honored in the state rituals.³⁹ Instead, they exalted Chŏng Mongju (1337–1392), who did not give up his loyalty to the falling Koryŏ, as the progenitor of Korean Neo-Confucianism.⁴⁰ They succeeded in honoring Chŏng in the Royal Confucian Shrine in 1517.⁴¹ Afterward, they tried to fill the temporal and discursive gap between Chŏng and themselves by creating an elaborate academic lineage. They developed the idea of the Four Worthies (Sahyŏn)—Kim Koengp'il, Chŏng Yŏch'ang (1450–1504), Cho Kwangjo (1482–1520), and Yi Ŏnjŏk.⁴² T'oegye was active in

this movement by writing the records of conduct for Cho and Yi and championing their moral way of life. When he died in 1570, the scholarly community added him to the Four Worthies and called them together the Five Worthies.

The movement to enshrine the Five Worthies in the Royal Confucian Shrine demonstrates how the scholarly community learned and repeated the successful mode of political participation devised by their contemporaries. As in Kim Ugoeng's case, the memorials to the throne functioned as the main claim-making apparatus; the rhetoric of *kongnon* was extensively used for a variety of purposes; and the scholars historicized their own political actions through meticulous record keeping. The unanimous voice over this issue across the country did not require petitioning scholars to organize political performances as much as Kim had. And yet, the signs of coordinated actions abounded.

Although scholars of the Royal Academy and several scholar-officials consistently argued the need to enshrine the Five Worthies, mostly in the 1570s, King Sŏnjo remained lukewarm. He justified his reluctance by claiming that the enshrinement could not be easily decided. However, after the Imjin War, the restoration of the destroyed Royal Confucian Shrine triggered renewed attention to this issue.⁴³ The controversies on ritual issues occur when the existing rituals do not provide the symbolic meanings that the society needs.⁴⁴ In postwar Chosŏn, likewise, the ruling elites tried to iron out the state rituals for the past Confucian worthies in order to set a new moral standard. The students of the Royal Academy collectively presented a series of memorials requesting the enshrinement of the Five Worthies in 1604. Sŏnjo, in response, questioned the eligibility of Yi Ŏnjŏk by criticizing his collaboration with court ministers whose political scheme had instigated the Literati Purge of 1545.⁴⁵ In response, these scholars claimed that the king did not construe the history correctly. Their memorial reads, "Because the words and deeds as well as the accomplishments of the Five Worthies are well explicated in both the historical records of the state and the unofficial history, Your Majesty must have well recognized the truth about their [noble] dispositions."⁴⁶ While giving equal credibility to official and unofficial historical accounts as the grounds to refute the king's criticism of Yi, these scholars accentuated that political achievements, which the king emphasized, could not be the sole criterion for enshrinement.

This petition also made use of *kongnon* to legitimize their collective action. These petitioners, however, legitimized their opinion as *kongnon*

because the scholarly community had requested that the same issue be addressed over the years: “We wonder whether Your Majesty would not regard our opinion as the *kongnon*. Then, does Your Majesty think the presentation of [numerous] memorials by Confucian scholars for about thirty years since 1568 is their adulation [only] for the past scholars whom they like? The propensity for moral virtue belongs to the mind and heart of everyone and thus cannot be stopped. Then, how could it be possible to reduce [our request for enshrining the Five Worthies] to only our prejudice? Also, how could it be possible to say that this request is not *kongnon*?”⁴⁷ The historicity of their own opinions made their voices legitimate and impartial. More significantly, these scholars avoided offering their view about Yi’s political conduct in 1545 with this emphasis on the unanimous voice that had been sounding for several decades.

The Royal Academy scholars presented three more memorials on this issue to debunk the king’s criticism of Yi. Although Sŏnjo did not give up his original stance, he could not completely turn away from the collective opinion of the scholars. In response to the last memorial, the king stated:

I have examined your memorials. I have already replied that I cannot make a hasty judgment on this issue. There is nothing wrong with deciding this issue later. Also, I do understand that you have your own understanding about Yi Ŏnjŏk. [However,] how can only your opinion be credible? There might be no one who could discuss this issue [in a way to satisfy everyone]. Upon receiving your request to enshrine [the Five Worthies], I did want to clear up people’s doubts about Yi through writing several lines. I would [be willing to] abandon Yi rather than enshrining a disqualified scholar in the Royal Confucian Shrine. I am saying this to advocate and promote the Confucian Way. . . . You got angry and startled after listening to my opinion without studying this issue even once. . . . Wait until another day to bring up this issue again. I will write my opinion on this issue someday, and we will be able to tell right and wrong then.⁴⁸

This quotation exhibits the complicated power relation between the monarch and the scholarly community in deciding Confucian ritual norms and turning the past into history. Although the king occupied the pinnacle of political power, he could not spurn the collective voices of Confucian scholars. Their political opinions voiced in unity could not be invalidated solely through the political hierarchy.

The requests of the scholarly community to enshrine the Five Worthies continued, and intensified in 1608. The restoration of the Royal Confucian Shrine was being completed, and Kwanghae (r. 1608–1623) ascended the throne. Confucian literati from all over the country presented joint memorials in this year, in concert with the students of the Royal Academy and the royal ministers. Kwanghae remained unenthusiastic about this issue until 1610, when the nonofficial literati and government officials requested the enshrinement of the Five Worthies on a daily basis from the late fourth to the late fifth month. On the first day of the sixth month, Kwanghae, at long last, ordered royal ministers to discuss the procedures required for the enshrinement.⁴⁹ On the fourth day of the ninth month, he issued an edict to publicly promulgate the enshrinement of the Five Worthies in the Royal Confucian Shrine.⁵⁰ Four days later, Kwanghae personally performed the sacrificial ritual at the Royal Confucian Shrine with the crown prince.⁵¹

The grand goal that the nationwide scholarly community unanimously demanded was achieved. In this process, the Confucian literati confirmed that their collective activism through joint memorials could yield decisive political effects. One difference between this case and Kim Ugoeng's is the near absence of performative elements. When scholarly communities raised unanimous voices, they did not have to worry about their opinions being neglected in the already established bureaucratic structure. Their joint memorials focused more on rhetoric and content than on contentious performances to attract attention from the general public.

THE DECLINING EFFECTS OF COLLECTIVE ACTIVISM IN THE AGE OF FACTIONALISM

Now that their academic heroes were officially sanctified in the state ritual space, Confucian literati needed another common goal to bring nationwide scholars together again. However, this climax of collective activism coincided with the rise of factionalism in court politics, which subsequently affected the political culture of the nation as a whole. It did not take long for the rural scholarly communities to align with political factions in the court. The political system and bureaucratic structure, moreover, became much more stable and rational than during the earlier period when the *sarim* scholars first entered officialdom. In this situation, the rural scholars began to use their powerful mechanism of political mobilization for much more minor purposes—to reinforce their positions in the factional competitions.

Their joint memorials proved effective in impeaching their factional enemies or political opponents. The brawls between scholarly groups significantly reduced the legitimacy of their political voices. Joint memorials of nonofficial scholars could no longer generate meaningful impacts on the state political discourse after this period.

The rise of factionalism from the late sixteenth century caused convergence among regional, academic, and political identities. Academics' identities, formed in different regions based upon their own intellectual traditions, shaped their political stance and decided their factional affiliations. Other political and regional considerations entered in; the Confucian norms no longer composed the dominant identity for rural scholars from the early seventeenth century. Consequently, their political voices diversified; scholar groups abused political epistolary practices for their own interests on the national stage; and the political effects of their collective activism atrophied rapidly. The state authority dismissed the abundant joint memorials expressing contentious views as a reflection of the conflicts of self-interest among different factions allied with scholar groups.

The influence of factionalism began to appear right after the enshrinement of the Five Worthies. This event prompted the academic traditions bracketed in various localities to unfold at the state level as a promising source of political power. In particular, Chŏng Inhong openly argued against the enshrinement of Yi Ŏnjŏk and T'oegye in his memorial to resign his recent appointment as fifth state councilor in 1611.⁵² Chŏng, a leading figure in the Pugin faction, underlined the rigid will of his teacher, Cho Sik, to stay outside officialdom as the authentic option for Confucian scholars living through political turmoil, while problematizing the high offices held by Yi and T'oegye, especially during the Literati Purge of 1545. Chŏng further explained that T'oegye had defamed Cho without knowing his genuine scholarship and morality.⁵³ Considering this issue in conjunction with the honoring processes for Cho Sik that he led afterward, it does not seem that Chŏng brought this up simply to argue against the defamation of his teacher. It appears that he feared the rise of T'oegye's disciples in court politics and intended to create his own academic brand as the source of political power. Local scholars in Chŏng's hometown, Hapch'ŏn, began to present joint memorials requesting the enshrinement of Cho from 1613. The royal court posthumously conferred the honorific title of Munjŏng upon Cho in 1614, for which Chŏng's power in court was essential.⁵⁴ Now, collective activism was geared toward the interests of a very specific scholarly group in the

central government. This was completely different from the past, when collective actions were taken to achieve such lofty goals as eradicating Buddhist influences or instilling Confucian norms in the state discourse.

Almost all scholar-officials criticized Chŏng for his slander of the Confucian worthies. For instance, Kim Sanghŏn claimed to be surprised because only Chŏng went against the unanimous respect of the scholarly community for Yi and T'oegyŏ.⁵⁵ The collaboration of scholar groups from different regions made the enshrinement of the Five Worthies possible, against the rigid skepticism of Sŏnjo and Kwanghae. Chŏng's opposite view, therefore, could undermine the legitimacy of political participation by the scholarly community. To rephrase Kim's words, Chŏng's criticism might encroach on the new sociopolitical role of Confucian scholars that they had attained through opposing the monarch's preference to impose the role of guardians of the state system upon them. Echoing this sentiment, students of the Royal Academy removed Chŏng from their roster of Confucian scholars. The political contention caused by his diatribe shifted the nature of the debates over the canonization of past Confucian scholars from contention between the monarch and the scholarly community to that among different scholar groups. This changed the political function of the collectivity of scholar groups.

About two months after Chŏng's presentation of his memorial, the royal court began to receive joint memorials delivering diverse views on this issue presented by local scholar groups. Each group came to regard the state ritual institution as the effective source of their own political authority, and consequently, requests for attention to minor local interests abounded in these memorials. The need to unify scholars at the state level no longer existed. Chŏng's pupils from the southern Yŏngnam area presented a couple of memorials defending Cho Sik and Chŏng. Their accounts underscore the localism-oriented academic tradition as their self-identity. Pak Kŏn'gap (d.u.), for instance, states in his memorial: "Your subject was born in the town where Cho Sik lived, and studied under Chŏng Inhong. Your subject has not learned a lot but respects the pureness of [their] morality. After learning of the [groundless] criticism of Chŏng, your subject could not help writing some words to ask Your Majesty to distinguish right from wrong."⁵⁶ When politically used, the combination of geographical proximity and the master-disciple relationship boosted the cohesiveness among members of a local scholar group, transforming them into a decisive political group. Three criteria—localism, academic lineage, and political identity—would together

mold the topography of the political culture of Chosŏn Korea in the period to come.

In the northern Yŏngnam area, meanwhile, the intellectual heirs of T'oegye collaborated to debunk Chŏng's criticism of their master and Yi, whom T'oegye had particularly eulogized. In the fourth month of 1611, one month after Chŏng's presentation of his memorial, Kŭm Ŭnghun (1540–1616) and Kim Chungch'ŏng (1567–1629) circulated a letter to T'oegye school scholars, organizing a meeting at Tosan Academy to discuss how they would react to Chŏng's defamation of their academic tradition.⁵⁷ Early in the sixth month, scholars led by Kim Pongjo (1572–1630) presented a series of five joint memorials to the throne to criticize Chŏng. There remains no detailed record of how this group of scholars was mobilized and by what process they produced and presented their memorials. However, the collection of Kim's writings includes the five joint memorials presented by his group from the fourth day to the fourteenth day of the sixth month of 1611. Kim's group argued that making a distinction between right and wrong would be essential to promote the Confucian Way, and this would not be possible without punishing Chŏng, who had intentionally confused right and wrong.⁵⁸ Kwanghae's responses display an unfavorable reaction to joint memorials produced by scholar groups. In the fourth joint memorial, Kim again stressed that the king did not make a clear distinction between right and wrong; although Kwanghae had enshrined Yi and T'oegye in the Royal Confucian Shrine, he did not exactly know why the two scholars deserved this honor. Although Kwanghae was not fully influenced by heterodox discourse, Kim continued, he did not precisely understand why these two worthies were not to be blamed; right and wrong coexisted in the king's logic.⁵⁹ To this memorial, Kwanghae responded that because different people can have different opinions, he did not think it right for Kim's group to collectively support one particular opinion.⁶⁰ He defended Chŏng by arguing that he had inadvertently criticized T'oegye and Yi while honoring his teacher. Kwanghae here particularly expressed his disapproval of using collectivity as a political tool. He made it clear that he could not tolerate the collective action of Kim's group expressing their rage in invidious terms.⁶¹ In the last joint memorial, Kim argued that denouncing other scholars was not the right way to respect one's teacher. He thus claimed that his group presented memorials not to canonize T'oegye and Yi but to safeguard the Confucian Way and the national morale. The king replied to this memorial by ordering these scholars to just return to their studies.⁶²

The negative response of the monarch to these joint memorials raises a question about the political effectiveness of the collective textual practices. As discussed earlier, the enormous thrust of joint memorials by scholars both inside and outside officialdom made the enshrinement of the Five Worthies possible. The situation in 1611 was completely different from that of the year before in that the scholarly community no longer spoke with a unanimous voice. This provided the monarch with leeway to reinforce his political sway by deepening the conflicts between scholar groups. In this context, their collectivity did not bring about either a perception of moral superiority or impressive publicity, as their predecessors had enjoyed, but came to be seen as their selfish pursuit of power in national politics. Therefore, it was not enough for local scholar groups to simply rely on their collectivity to create political effects at the state level. They needed a more sophisticated agenda to overwhelm both competing groups and the state authority. The political participation of diverse scholar groups in the period to come, therefore, evolved into either very elaborate cooperation between the scholar-officials in the court and their cohorts at the local level or novel projects to tweak existing perceptions about the academies.

Sticking to the Existing Claim-Making Method

As the conflation between academic schools and localism developed into exclusive factionalism, the rise and fall of different factions characterized the late Chosŏn political culture. In particular, the competition between the two major political factions, the Namin and Sŏin, shaped the discourses on academic lineage and the enshrinement of past Confucian worthies. Whereas Namin scholars claimed their inheritance of T'oegye's scholarly tradition based upon their local scholarly network in the Yŏngnam area, the Sŏin faction, which sprawled around the capital and in Ch'ungch'ŏng and Chŏlla, identified themselves as the intellectual offspring of Yi I and Sŏng Hon. The belated attempt of the Sŏin faction to enshrine these two founding figures in the Royal Confucian Shrine beginning in King Injo's (r. 1623–1649) reign caused clashes with Namin scholars. The destiny of these two Confucian worthies in the state ritual space fluctuated widely depending on whether or not the Sŏin faction dominated court politics. Yi and Sŏng were initially enshrined in the Royal Confucian Shrine in 1682 during King Sukchong's (r. 1674–1720) reign, when the Sŏin faction was dominant. However, this was undone in 1689, when the Namin faction retook the leading role in

the royal court. Five years later, in 1694, the state reenshrined these two Confucian worthies, as the Sŏin faction regained dominance in court politics. The contention between the two factions continued throughout the seventeenth century. Despite the significance of this particular issue, the joint memorials submitted by the factions did not create any decisive breakthrough in court debates. The scholarly communities, nonetheless, continued to use the joint memorial system. When the social structure was stable and there were no major changes in the political system, social actors tended to replicate preexisting political performances, irrespective of their effectiveness.

The first request to enshrine Yi and Sŏng appeared in 1635, when the Sŏin faction dominated court politics during Injo's reign. Song Sihyŏng (d.u.), with about 270 colleagues in the Royal Academy, presented a joint memorial for this purpose.⁶³ It triggered some discussion in the royal court, but Injo brushed it aside, in spite of his dependence on the Sŏin faction. This issue did not appear in the *sillok* again until the end of Injo's reign. However, it was revived when Hyojong ascended in 1649. Responding to this, Yu Chik (1602–1662) presented a joint memorial objecting to the enshrinement of Yi and Sŏng in 1650, which was signed by about nine hundred scholars from forty-four of the seventy-one prefectures of the Yŏngnam area.⁶⁴ The record of conduct of Yu Chik illustrates how the impact of collective political actions by local Confucian scholars had dwindled in court politics, and how risky it was to take the role of leader of a joint memorial. This record reads that the scholars of the Royal Academy requested several times to enshrine Yi and Sŏng in the early days of Hyojong's reign, and this renewed discussion prompted Yu's group to prove their disqualification as enshrinees. Yi Simyŏng (1590–1674), one of the leading figures in the Yŏngnam T'oegye school, drafted an early version of the joint memorial. In it, he argued that if Yi I's criticism of T'oegye represented the "right," which was an attempt to rebuke T'oegye's argument highlighting the supremacy of the Confucian Way (*i*) over material power (*ki*), the scholarship of both T'oegye and Zhu Xi fell into the "wrong," because T'oegye had inherited Zhu Xi's Confucian theories. He continued that Yi I should not be enshrined because he had censured T'oegye, whom the state had already honored as a Confucian worthy.⁶⁵ The presented version of the joint memorial, drafted by Yi Ku (1613–1654), also stressed the academic disqualification of Yi and Sŏng. Yi Ku particularly criticized Yi I's theory on the relation between the Four Beginnings and the Seven Chŏng.⁶⁶ Kwŏn Sangil later commented on this

memorial, saying that Yi Ku's extensive discussion of Neo-Confucian theory academically rationalized the objection to enshrine Yi I and Sŏng Hon beyond the political consideration of this issue.⁶⁷

Around two months later, some forty scholars, also from the Yŏngnam area and led by Sin Sŏkhyŏng (d.u.), presented a joint memorial to demonstrate the falsehood of Yu Chik's memorial.⁶⁸ The antagonistic opinion brought up by the scholar group from the same region critically undermined the political authenticity of Yu's group. Hyojong's response to this memorial shows that the conflicts between different scholar groups distracted the king from the main points of the given issue. The king stated: "I understand what you intend to say in your memorial. I see that you scholars conflict with each other and cause trouble all the time. In my opinion, what you are doing does not differ at all from distinguishing a superior one in a flock of [detestable] crows."⁶⁹ The king bypassed the major point of the discussion and underscored the negative effects of contention among scholar groups, reducing them to self-interested rabble rather than trying to understand the two competing opinions. The organization of scholar groups into political factions and the competition among them empowered the monarch to deny the political perspectives of the scholarly community by highlighting the evil effects of the political unrest that their competitions stirred up. Moreover, one discussion between the king and royal ministers reveals their suspicion about the number of signers of the joint memorials. Because the number of local scholars who went to the capital to present their joint memorials amounted to only about eighty or ninety, there was no way to verify who had indeed signed them.⁷⁰ The collectivity inscribed on the texts could not guarantee the political empowerment of the local scholarly community.

Royal Academy scholars also reacted to this joint memorial by removing Yu from their roster of Confucian scholars. They went on to punish him by defaming him through a parade stigmatizing his name written on a piece of yellow paper as an immoral felon.⁷¹ Although Yu's record of conduct simply states that he lost interest in sociopolitical issues and devoted himself to scholarship from this time on,⁷² it appears that he personally suffered from this punishment. In his letter written in 1650 to a group of local scholars, Yu expressed his worry about the recent decision of Yŏngnam scholars not to take the civil service examination to protest the punishments imposed on him. As Yu thought it might worsen his situation, he asked these scholars to find different ways to help him.⁷³ Also, his reply to a scholar named Pae Tŏgŏn (d.u.) requested that Pae not instigate local scholars to boycott the

civil service examination because it would be too much as an expression of sympathy for him.⁷⁴ Yu later advised his nephew, Kim Kyegwang (d.u.), who would become the leader of joint memorials requesting an official charter for Samgye Academy in Andong, not to take this position. He warned that it could invite disastrous outcomes, just like the one that he had undergone.⁷⁵ Nonofficial Confucian literati had to consider the possible risks from their collective actions as Chosŏn politics became malicious due to the rise of factionalism.

As shown, divided voices, geared toward their group interests, mitigated the effects of their collective political actions. However, Chosŏn scholars persisted in expressing their opinions with existing methods of political participation. When the bureaucratic structure and social system were stable, political actors did not find motivation to abandon old claim-making methods and invent a new one.

Defining Scholarly Identity through Political Participation

Why did Chosŏn Confucians stick to the joint memorial system, even after it became ineffective? In the changed political environment in both Chosŏn and northeast Asia, the political participation of scholarly communities delivered completely different connotations in the seventeenth century. To quote Samuel Huntington, “People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity.”⁷⁶ Chosŏn scholars in this period were willing to join the state political discourse to figure out their role within the regime or civilization. Participation in the political process allowed them to publicly confirm that they deserved the rights and respect that their identities entailed.⁷⁷ Therefore, they had no reason to bother innovating new claim-making repertoires. They could repeat old methods of collective activism, effective or not, because what they anticipated from these hackneyed performances had completely changed.

The desire to define self-identity closely resulted from the drastic changes in the East Asian political order after the Imjin War and two Manchu invasions. The collapse of the Ming and the subsequent establishment of the Qing dynasty in 1644 led Korean literati to redefine the place of the Chosŏn in the region both politically and culturally. Although they reluctantly accepted the political hegemony of the “barbarian” Qing, Korean Confucians strongly disavowed the cultural leadership of this Manchu regime. Chosŏn literati considered themselves the legitimate heirs of the fallen

Ming, and Korea the last bastion of Confucian civilization. To be loyal to the already dead Ming dynasty featured the symbolic claim that the Chosŏn dynasty was its authentic heir and thus that the center of Confucian civilization had shifted to Korea.⁷⁸ The literati developed discourses on respect for the Zhou tradition (*chonjuron*) and the difference between the civilized and barbarians (*hwairon*). The scrutiny of the Zhou origin of East Asian Confucian tradition manifested the foreignness of the Japanese and Manchu invaders and subsequently intensified the distinction between the civilized and barbarians in political discourse. This binary frame helped Korean Confucians dilute the recent national disgrace—the Chosŏn, as the center of Confucian civilization, had been neither defeated by Japan nor subjugated to Manchu culturally.⁷⁹ This visceral reaction triggered an aggressive political agenda calling for revenge on Manchu on behalf of the fallen Ming—the Northern Expedition (Pukpŏllon)—during the reign of Hyojong, which lingered until the end of the dynasty in relation to the revulsion toward Western imperialism and Japanese colonialism.

This idea of Chosŏn as Little Middle Kingdom (Sojunghwa) did not simply remain a political metaphor. Some individual Confucian literati embodied it, which subsequently changed their way of life. Yi Simyŏng, a leading figure of the Yŏngnam T'oegye school in the seventeenth century,⁸⁰ studied under Chang Hŭnghyo (1564–1634), who had learned under first-generation T'oegye school scholars such as Kim Sŏngil and Yu Sŏngnyong. Yi passed down this scholarship to his sons, Yi Hwiil (1619–1672) and Yi Hyŏnil (1627–1704). His grandson, Yi Chae, also led the Yŏngnam T'oegye school by inheriting this family academic tradition. It is remarkable that Yi Simyŏng decided to withdraw from normal life upon hearing of the fall of the Ming and the establishment of the Manchu Qing dynasty. He led his family onto the isolated Subi Mountain of Yŏnghae prefecture in 1653. He seems to have lived there for an extended period, as Yi Chae was born in there in 1657.⁸¹ Yi Hyŏnil's biography of Yi Simyŏng tells us that right after the fall of the Ming, Yi intended to circulate an open letter (*kyŏngmun*)⁸² to call for united resistance against the Qing in concert with the Ming revivalist movement in China's Shandong area.⁸³ This way of life in this specific period holds vital significance in that a prominent scholarly family, leaders of the regional Confucian tradition, willfully distanced themselves as far as possible from the political center. This did not hinder them from mobilizing regional scholars. To the contrary, this positioning reinforced their ideological purity as academic and political leaders. The changes in the East Asian political

order caused Korean Confucians to redefine their notion about space and its relation to power.

The domestic political discourses also reflected this changed world order. Hyojong's death in 1659 sparked debates on the propriety of the mourning ritual practices for the Chosŏn king and the royal family, which continued until 1674, when Hyojong's queen died. The ritual controversy focused on how to construe the Chosŏn king's death in terms of Confucian classical protocols. When Hyojong died in 1659, deciding the level of the mourning garment for Injo's widow, Queen Dowager Chaüi (1624–1688), surfaced as a problem, because there were different interpretations of Hyojong's status in relation to his father. Hyojong was Injo's second son and was appointed as crown prince upon the death of his elder brother. Whereas the Sŏin faction led by Song Siyŏl and Song Chun'gil argued that the queen dowager's ritual level for Hyojong should be decided based upon his filial status as the second son of Injo, the Namin faction, headed by Hŏ Mok (1595–1682), Yun Hyu (1617–1680), and Yun Sŏndo (1587–1671), claimed that the queen dowager's ritual level should be the same as for the ruler, irrespective of the biological filial rank. Whereas the former group emphasized the universality of Confucian ritualism, the latter group put more emphasis on the political supremacy of Chosŏn kingship. Queen Dowager Chaüi ended up wearing the mourning garment for Hyojong for one year, following the Sŏin scholar-officials' argument, although the Namin group continued to cast doubt on this decision. However, the issue reheated upon the death of Queen Insŏn (1618–1674), Hyojong's widow. Again, it concerned the ritual level of mourning garment that Queen Dowager Chaüi had to wear for her daughter-in-law, which the relationship between Hyojong and Injo would ordain. Unlike the debate fifteen years previously, in 1674 the Namin overwhelmed the Sŏin faction; thus, the queen dowager's relation to Hyojong was redefined as that toward the ruler. This controversy delivers more condensed connotations than truncated explanations of the ritual scholarship or factionalism in several respects, if considered in the context of diverse attempts to search for a new self-identity in seventeenth-century Chosŏn Korea. This ritual controversy should be interpreted against the backdrop of a shifted political and cultural order in East Asia—the fall of the Ming and the rise of the Qing—entailing a claim of Chosŏn intellectuals about their role as the sole guardians of Confucian culture. In this regard, the mourning for the Chosŏn king represents “the redefinition of the Korean state, its relationship to [Confucian] civilization, and its role in a changed world order.”⁸⁴ The participation

of rural scholars in this ritual controversy thus conveyed a symbolic meaning of their cultural and political identity in the changed world order.

Yu Sech'öl (1627–1681) led the presentation of joint memorials on this ritual issue signed by about 1,100 Yŏngnam scholars in 1666. Yu left a daily record detailing how these scholars produced and presented their joint memorials. It covers from the twelfth day of the twelfth month of 1665, when Andong scholars sent out the first circular letters mustering local scholars to all prefectures and academies in the Yŏngnam area, to the fourteenth day of the fourth month of 1666, when Yu returned to Andong from Seoul after submitting the joint memorials to the throne. Although the Sŏin scholar-officials dominated the decision on the mourning for Hyojong after his death, the Namin faction scholars remained adamant about rectifying Hyojong's status as the eldest son who succeeded to the throne legitimately. The joint memorial of Yu's group was an attempt to reverse the political decision made under the domination of the Sŏin faction.⁸⁵

The Yŏngnam scholars, from the beginning of their collective actions, sensed that their joint memorials would not produce any immediate political effects. They must have intended some consequences other than the correction of ritual protocols for the late king. Besides implementing an already familiar repertoire—wearing the same color, marching in formation, and ritualizing their gatherings⁸⁶—the scholars were desperate to include as many literary licentiates and classics licentiates as possible to legitimize their opinion and stress their worthiness, because “this case is very different from past cases.”⁸⁷ Moreover, they were concerned that local offices had been checking on the mobilization of the group. Yu's account records that one clerk of the Andong district reported what the local scholars were doing for this joint memorial to the local office, and the information was even forwarded to the governor of Kyŏngsang. Moreover, the slaves in the Andong state school, where Yu's group gathered and discussed various issues, mostly belonged to the local officials. They informed their masters of what these scholars were doing. Thus, the scholars decided to move their meetings to the local state school in Yech'ŏn.⁸⁸ The investigative gaze of the state authority put the rural scholars' collective activism under pressure from the beginning of their mobilization.

According to Yu Sech'öl's record, he thought it highly possible that the state would punish all participating scholars, due to the sensitivity and significance of this ritual issue.⁸⁹ The discussion about whether or not Song Siyöl's name had to be specified in the joint memorial shows that some

participating scholars had serious concerns about punishment from the royal court. They heard that one Namin scholar-official had been removed from the roster of Confucian scholars because the censoring organs staffed with Sŏin officials condemned his letter sent to Song Siyŏl, in which he criticized Song's ritual theory. After hearing this news, some scholars preferred to indicate Song indirectly as "the official who discussed the ritual" (*üiryesin*) in fear of possible punishment for pinpointing the powerhouse official to be blamed. But Yu persisted in specifying Song's name to make their point clear.⁹⁰ As Yu Chik's reaction to the punishment from the court reveals, the removal of scholars from the roster and the prohibition against taking the civil service examination traumatized Confucian scholars because they could not fulfill their expected role in society with this kind of stigma. Many remained reluctant to sign joint memorials. The circular letter sent out on the fifth day of the third month in the phase of collecting signatures from scholars all around the Yŏngnam area actually warned signers of possible punishment.⁹¹ Also, on the twenty-third day of the third month, when Yu's group was discussing the submission of the second memorial, Yu reminded the participants that he would not be responsible for any punishment from the court.⁹²

Having perceived the political ineffectiveness of the joint memorial and potential punishments, Yu proposed to append their annotations of excerpts on the mourning ritual from various Confucian classics to their joint memorial.⁹³ Following Yu's suggestion, the scholars began to edit and annotate excerpts from Confucian ritual classics. They titled the resulting text *The Evidential Research on the Mourning Garments* (Sangbok kojŭng) and presented it to the throne along with their memorial. The politicization of classical knowledge in part reflects the academic atmosphere of the seventeenth century, when Confucian scholars manipulated the study of the classics for partisan interests in the name of orthodoxy.⁹⁴ The beginning of *The Evidential Research on the Mourning Garments* demonstrates this pivotal function of textual studies in the political debate:

After looking up the debates on the mourning ritual of 1659, your subjects learned that the ritual theory put forth by Song Siyŏl does not correspond to the Confucian ritual classics. So, it has already marred the ceremonies and rituals of the state and made people perplexed. [It is the reason that] we cannot help discussing this issue [again]. Thus, your subjects dared to produce elaborated explanations [on this issue] for the review of Your

Majesty by excerpting essential parts from *The Comprehensive Explanation on the Ceremonies and Rituals* (Üirye t'onghae) and also by widely quoting diverse theories of past scholars.⁹⁵

Because an erroneous understanding about the Confucian classics caused the political problem, supremacy in scholarship would guarantee political domination. Under the changed power relation in East Asia, the cultural and political domains had converged in a new self-definition of the Chosŏn as the only guardian of Confucian civilization. Chosŏn intellectuals therefore had to redraw “the territorial and conceptual boundaries of civilization and barbarity” to acquire symbolic superiority over the “barbarian” Qing to which Korea was politically and ritually subservient.⁹⁶ Because this symbolic self-elevation rested upon confirmation of the superiority of Korea in Confucian culture, the academic discourse directly shaped the political concerns. Thus, the discourse on Confucian scholarship that the local scholarly community scrutinized, at least rhetorically, became the central discourse of the civilization.

The rumor about the joint memorial of Yu's group had already spread to the capital among leading figures of the Sŏin faction even before its presentation. Yu Sech'öl's record on the eighteenth day of the third month in 1666, one day after the submission of the joint memorial, explains that the Sŏin officials had heard that this joint memorial would pinpoint one specific official to be executed.⁹⁷ It is understandable that the mobilization of this large number of local scholars from all around the province for about three months was big news for political elites in the capital. The Sŏin faction had been working on ways to nullify this collective activism by Yŏngnam scholars.⁹⁸ The spiral letter that Yi Tansang sent to Hong Chuwŏn (1606–1672) in 1666 decried this joint memorial as groundless gibberish (figure 6.1, top).⁹⁹ However, the Sŏin did not simply denounce it but also rallied their collective opposition to torpedo the Yŏngnam scholars' political ambition. Another letter sent to Hong shows that Sŏin officials shared political information with nonofficial members of their faction through extensive epistolary interactions. Although Yi was not serving the court at the moment, he was informed of the court discussion of this political event that was actually developing while he was exchanging letters with Hong. Yi mentioned that he knew what the king discussed with his ministers during the royal lecture because Hong Myŏngha (1608–1668), the second state councilor, closely described it in his letter. Kim Suhang and his brothers also conveyed the

news about court debates on this particular issue. Yi's letter also mentioned the memorials presented by students at the Royal Academy and officials at the Royal Secretariat, which he denounced as false interpretations of Confucian rituals that took into account only the present situation. He argued that even the king's order was corrupted with these claims, which is exactly opposite to the claim made by Song Siyöl. Yi suggested that this point should constitute the main claim in the memorial to be submitted to refute the Yöngnam scholars.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the Söin scholars from Ch'ungch'öng were working on a joint memorial disclaiming Yu's group, a copy of which Yi received from Hong Chuwön. He discussed its contents with such political dignitaries as Hong Myönggha and Kim Suhang before it was actually submitted to the throne.¹⁰¹ The scholars belonging to the same political faction coordinated effective epistolary networks connecting the officials in the capital with scholars in the countryside, so the Söin officials were ready to champion the joint memorials to be presented by their cohorts in the countryside.

Here, it is also notable that Yi Tansang's letter to Hong Chuwön bears spiral form. Yi applied this form to indicate the private and informal nature of this correspondence. This signal might have affected how widely Hong would share the letter. The same letter included in the collection of Yi's writings had been extensively edited in the course of shifting to the public realm, and the spiral effects had been straightened (figure 6.1, bottom). The usage of spiral forms as the marker of the communicative vernacular facilitated the orchestration between private correspondence and sociopolitical epistles in the political mobilization of scholar groups. Unlike this case, however, most letters written by elites have survived only in printed forms, although the status of the original manuscripts is unknown. The usage of the vernacular spatial layouts seems to have added one more layer of sophistication in political communication among male elites.

The coordination of Söin scholars turned out to be very effective in discouraging the Yöngnam scholar group. The royal ministers and the king raised questions about the political authenticity of the collective actions of the local scholarly community, as observed in the previous cases. Yu Sech'öl's record tells us that 103 scholars including himself went to Seoul and presented the joint memorial on the seventeenth day of the third month of 1666. However, Hong Myönggha discounted these scholars as hired and argued that more than half of them ran away within several days after arriving. Hong urged the king not to treat them as Confucian scholars.¹⁰² In response to this joint memorial, King Hyönjong (r. 1659–1674) made it clear that he

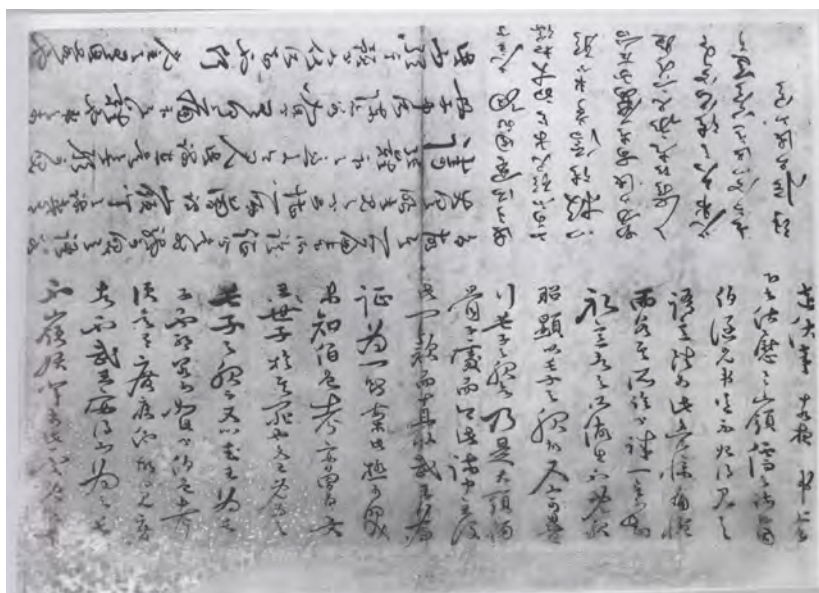


FIGURE 6.1. Yi Tansang's letter to Hong Chuwŏn. The original letter in spiral form (top) was straightened up when it was printed as part of Yi's writing collection (bottom right). Image of the original letter from Han'guk koganch'al yŏn'guhoe, ed., *Yet munin tŭl ūi ch'osŏ kanch'al*, 122–23. Photo courtesy of Taunsaem. Image of the printed version from *Chŏnggwanjae chip*, 8:2a. Outline added by the author. Photo courtesy of the Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics.

would not accept opinions on this already settled issue, even if many scholars relied on their collectivity to justify the legitimacy of their opinions.¹⁰³ The court actually punished Yu with prohibition from taking the civil service examination and did not lift it until 1674.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the group's insistence on presenting the joint memorial clearly inscribed their political role. In the political culture of eighteenth-century France, for instance, political expressions made opinion holders organize the present by rocking old certainties. Likewise, rural scholars' collective activism in Chosŏn "created new forms of alterity" by turning away from the given political situation.¹⁰⁵ Whereas the previous collective political actions of the local scholarly community were mostly concerned with regional and sectarian issues, such as requesting or opposing the canonization of specific scholars, this joint memorial reveals the attempt of provincial scholars to redefine their role in the national discourse bearing on Korea's place in Confucian civilization.¹⁰⁶ In this vein, Yu's taking the leadership position, despite the likelihood of punishment from the court, evinces that his authority as a legitimate Confucian scholar offset his loss of reputation and privilege in the existing political system. The presentation of joint memorials might be punishable but conferred no infamy upon participating scholars.

Although the presentations of joint memorials did not have immediate and decisive effects on state policy, this kind of collective action of the scholarly community came to function as the preliminary process for political debates in the royal court. When these political actions were recorded and referenced later, they could influence the actual decision-making process. In fact, the joint memorials presented by Yu's group, which the king and Sŏin ministers had decried as erroneous in 1666, functioned as the reference guiding the decision-making process on the mourning level of Queen Dowager Chaŭi for her daughter-in-law in 1674.¹⁰⁷

MODIFYING THE TEMPLATES OF COLLECTIVE ACTIVISM

Even if the primary goal of political participation was not to promote the self-interest of scholarly communities, its diminished effects triggered the revision of the existing repertoire of collective actions. Moreover, it had become more difficult to have memorials reviewed by the king, due to new administrative hurdles such as the *kŭnsil* system. King Yŏngjo ordered this system implemented in 1773 to prevent too many memorials being submitted by nonofficial scholars. It required the head scholar of the Royal

Academy (*changŭi*) to preliminarily review all memorials presented by non-official literati to decide whether or not they should be forwarded to the Office of the Royal Secretariat.¹⁰⁸ Yŏngjo originally intended to guide petitioners to be more prudent with their memorials by sharing responsibility with the Royal Academy. However, the Royal Academy scholars manipulated this system to exclude scholar groups supporting political factions other than their own.¹⁰⁹ From the late eighteenth century, nonofficial scholars, particularly from the Yŏngnam area, focused on increasing the number of participants to bypass the *kŭnsil* system as well as to increase their political authority. Ultimately, King Chŏngjo received a joint memorial signed by 10,057 Confucian scholars of the Yŏngnam area on the twenty-seventh day of the intercalary fourth month of 1792. The engagement of such a large number took place only seven times and prompted the coinage of a term, *maninso*, meaning a memorial signed by ten thousand people.

The 1792 *maninso* reprimanded court ministers who had criticized Chŏngjo's devotion as a way to honor his father, the late Crown Prince Sado (1735–1762).¹¹⁰ It also promised Chŏngjo that they would support him to uphold his royal authority. Considering the sensitivity of the subject matter and the intensity of factional strife in this period, it must not have been easy to draw the consensus of more than ten thousand rural scholars in order to produce this joint memorial. According to Ryu Ijwa's (1763–1837) daily record on the production and submission of this *maninso*, the Yŏngnam scholars relied on well-developed kinship networks. In a meeting held at Pyŏngsan Academy to rally regional scholarly communities, representatives from about thirty lineage groups were urged to encourage their clan members to join this cause. The participants were also expected to commit financially, as the signers were supposed to make monetary contributions to support this collective political action. To expedite the process, the leaders went to Seoul first, and the representatives of each town followed them to the capital with the signs that they collected. When everyone had gathered in Seoul, the group exceeded two hundred scholars, and they produced the draft to be submitted to the throne. In this process, the group decided to change their leader from Sŏng Ŏnjip (1732–1812), a retired ex-official, to Yi U (d.u.), a non-official scholar, in order to emphasize that their opinion represented the voices of nongovernmental sectors. However, Royal Academy scholars refused to forward the memorial to the court in their *kŭnsil* review. Yi U and his group decided to bypass the *kŭnsil* process and tried to submit it directly to the throne by staging a demonstration in front of the palace. However,

they were again turned down by the gatekeepers. As an impromptu measure, they asked a Namin court minister, Kim Handong (1740–1811), to notify the king of the existence of this *maninso*. Upon hearing this, Chǒngjo ordered them to be given an audience immediately.¹¹¹

Chǒngjo ordered Yi U and his group to read the memorial aloud in his presence. Yi had not completed reading half of the memorial when the sun set. Eight candles were lit, and he continued to read. Reading the memorial aloud must have enhanced the delivery of the message, as it allowed oral improvisations for embellishment, emphasis, and explanation. The oral performance and writing skills thus equally affected the reception of the given text.¹¹² After the reading, the king praised the loyalty and integrity of the Yǒngnam scholars and directed that the details of this memorial should be recorded. The summary of the memorial was included in the *sillok*, and the names of all 10,057 scholars were included in *The Daily Record of the Royal Secretariat*. Five days later, Chǒngjo appointed Yi the guard of Royal Tombs as a reward and granted some portions of rice to his group for their travel expenses back to their hometown.¹¹³ On the seventh day of the fifth month, Yi again presented a joint memorial to urge the king to promulgate the innocence of the late crown prince to the nation, the signers of which increased to 10,368.¹¹⁴ Although the king did not honor his father publicly as the joint memorial suggested, this political case marked a watershed moment after which Chǒngjo dominated state politics over the Noron faction.

Considering that the population of Korea in 1790 was about 7.4 million and the elite class made up only about 5 percent of the total,¹¹⁵ this level of political participation by nonofficial scholars was phenomenal. Chǒngjo admired this mobilization and asserted, “The opinion of the ten thousand scholars amounts to that of the whole nation” (*manyŏ changp’o chi ron, chŭk kugin chi ron*).¹¹⁶ The moral property of *kongnon* did not correspond to the number of people championing it. When the number of involved people exceeded a certain tipping point, however, the masses could generate political power that generated the new definition of *kongnon*.

The more signers the *maninso* included, the bigger its physical form became. We can obtain material information only from two existing *maninso* produced respectively in 1855 and 1884. The former was simply returned to the presenters by the king after its submission¹¹⁷ and has been preserved in Tosan Academy since then; the latter was not actually submitted because the court decision to adopt Western attire, against which the *maninso* rallied, was revoked due to the failed Kapsin coup. The coup took

place while the scholars were on their way to Seoul to submit their *maninso*; and as they did not need to submit it, they stored the text at Oksan Academy of Kyŏngju. The former *maninso*, a joint memorial presented by 10,094 Yŏngnam scholars in 1855. It is about 325 feet long and weighs about sixty-six pounds. For this single document, 130 sheets of paper were glued together. The contents occupy only about seven feet, and the rest is filled with participants' signatures. One sheet of paper includes the signatures of about eighty scholars. The number and unity of the participating scholars were visualized and embodied in the megasize *maninso*; this reinforced the political authority of nonofficial rural scholars in the national discourse. The production and handling of this monumental text might have required not only a substantial investment of resources but also the involvement and collaboration of many skilled hands for transcribing the contents of the memorial and names of participants, trimming and gluing together many sheets of paper, rolling and unrolling the text, making a box to hold it, wrapping the box with a cloth, and so on. The task of transporting this mammoth political document to the palace must have been very arduous, but it would have attracted attention from the general public. In a similar vein, the massive size of the *maninso* must have affected the ways the king and court ministers interpreted the political message that the text conveyed. Even before reading it, they would have been awed by its size and imagined the effort and resources put into its production and delivery. We can assume a symbolic impact of the collective textual practices, if only from the colossal physical form of joint memorials.

Just as nonofficial scholars in the late sixteenth century immediately emulated the techniques of collective activism devised by Kim Ugoeng's group, there were six more *maninso* following the 1792 case before the end of the Chosŏn dynasty. Unlike the previous joint memorials, however, it was not easy to rally more than ten thousand people for the same political cause. As shown in the 1792 *maninso*, political mobilizations of this size drew upon existing social networks such as kinship organizations and local academies, for which the systematic usage of diverse social epistolary genres was essential. As shown in table 6.1, several cases involved fewer than ten thousand participants, although modern scholars have categorized them together as *maninso*. However, the later scholars considered the 1792 case as the template to be studied and restaged. For instance, the 1855 *maninso* clearly invokes the 1792 case. It asserts that the petitioning scholars were biological and academic heirs of those who had submitted the *maninso* in 1792.¹¹⁸ The

TABLE 6.1. *Maninso* cases during the late Chosŏn period

Year	Subject	Number of participants
1792	Restoring the honor for Crown Prince Sado	10,057
1823	Abolition of discrimination against the secondary sons	9,996
1855	Restoring the honor for Crown Prince Sado	10,094
1871	Objection to the abolition of local academies	10,027
1875	Calling for the return of Grand Prince Hŭngsŏn Lord Taewŏn	About 10,000 (not specific)
1880	Expulsion of foreign influences	About 10,000 (not specific)
1884	Objection to the introduction of Western fashion	8,849

1871 *maninso* case, which called for the annulment of the court's decision to abolish most academies nationwide, also reveals how strictly petitioning scholars tried to follow the precedents in their mobilization. The circular letter explaining how many signers should be assigned to each town asserts that the decision was made based upon "old examples of scholars' memorials" (*yuso chi kurye*).¹¹⁹ Just like the 1792 case, this mobilization utilized the existing kinship organizations. The clan elders were responsible for getting both signatures and monetary donations from the kinsmen. Moreover, the departure of the petitioning scholars was graced with a spectacular send-off banquet. On the second day of the sixth month of 1871, scholars from the Yŏngnam area gathered at Tonam Academy of Sangju. The memorial was read aloud and wrapped in red cotton cloth, then put in a wooden box. The box was again wrapped with paper on which "Memorial by Yŏngnam Scholars to Call for Restoration of Academies" (Yŏngnam yusaeng ch'ŏng poksŏl sawŏn sangso) was written in big characters. Then all the scholars prostrated themselves to the north four times. A slave carried the box containing the memorial on his shoulders, and the scholars followed him in one line. The scholars sending them off filled the street and followed them as far as four kilometers, which many bystanders observed. The sighs and groans of the scholars filled the streets with uproarious noises.¹²⁰ All these descriptions strikingly resemble what was observed in Kim Ugoeng's case in 1565. The descriptions of these two different cases about three centuries apart also show similar narrative strategies. The practice of recording the political mobilization was modeled after the past precedents.

The dramatic return of Yŏngnam scholars in court politics in 1792 through *maninso* was not repeated by their successors. Although scholars from this region studied and imitated this particular case, the political effectiveness of *maninso* decreased almost immediately. Six later *maninso* cases neither yielded the meaningful political effects that the scholarly communities intended nor attracted much attention, despite the strenuous process of mobilizing rural scholars and resources. The innovative political performances had lost their edge very quickly, and later followers found their claim-making methods ineffective. However, political actors tended to stick to existing modes of political participation rather than innovating new performances. The *maninso* tradition continued until the collapse of the Chosŏn dynasty and the introduction of a modern form of governance under Japanese colonial rule. Only the total change in the mode of interaction between the society and the state made the joint memorial system obsolete in Korea.

The development of the joint memorial system in the late Chosŏn period shows the unique ways politically marginalized rural literati interacted with the state authority. The appropriation of well-developed local networks through diverse epistolary practices enabled them to participate in state discourses as legitimate political actors. They learned how to politicize their collectivity as well as how to visualize it in both epistolary and public spaces. In this context, political epistolary texts always occupied the center stage of claim-making performances. Those who mastered how to orchestrate the rhetoric of political texts and the performances dramatizing these messages ruled the national discourse of the period. In late Chosŏn Korea, the contents of political texts shaped the modes of political participation, and vice versa. The convergence of *kongnon* discourse and political activism of rural scholars through collective epistolary practices, which emerged in the late sixteenth century, characterized the Chosŏn literati's decisive choice of a radical political lifestyle focused on epistolary practices.

Epilogue

Legacies of the Chosŏn Epistolary Practices

THOSE who mastered how to manipulate diverse epistles emerged as the main actors on the national political stage. Thus nonofficial rural scholars who had been marginalized from court politics could join in the state discourses along with the monarch and court ministers. The effectiveness of circular letters and joint memorials in mobilizing groups of people and spreading their political ideas nationwide led to wide usage of this textual form by literati across the country. Toward the end of the Chosŏn dynasty, even nonelites frequently appropriated circular letters and joint memorials for their political protests. For example, concubines' sons as groups presented a series of joint memorials to abolish the social discrimination against them.¹ In 1772, about three thousand secondary sons from the Yŏngnam area presented a joint memorial on this issue.² From then on, they kept pressing the royal court to take meaningful action. By 1823, these men had succeeded in getting signatures from 9,996 people across the country, except in two northern provinces.³ By the nineteenth century, peasants had also appropriated circular letters in planning their uprisings. The circular letter in figure E.1 was produced in 1893; it actually sparked a nationwide Tonghak peasant uprising the following year. Remarkably, this letter mainly uses vernacular Korean, with literary Chinese words glossed in Korean pronunciations for nonelite readers. Even more intriguing is the way the senders signed it. As shown at the beginning of the letter, they drew a circle and signed their names around the circumference radially in order not to expose



FIGURE E.1. *Sabal t'ongmun* produced in 1893. Photo courtesy of the Donghak Peasant Revolution Foundation.

their leader, in case government officials read this. Because there is no preset or agreed-upon beginning and ending in these signatures, this circular letter did not reveal the hierarchy among the signers. Yet, this mode of signing did not simply function as an added security measure. It also manifested the solidarity among the participants in this particular collective political action. Because the circle drawn for this purpose is in the shape of a bowl, this type of circular letter was called a *sabal t'ongmun*, using the term *sabal*, which literally means “bowl.”⁴

Discrete political conditions expressed through writings in the same genre could generate completely different political effects. Therefore, the political epistolary genres evolved into various material forms at the discretion of different users. Moreover, social epistolary genres appeared in unlikely places in unexpected forms at the beginning of the modern period. When modern newspapers emerged in Korea in the late nineteenth century, some traditional epistles made their way onto the newspapers’ pages. One article published on September 8, 1898, in the *Capital Gazette* (Hwangsŏng sinmun) includes a circular letter written by two commoner women about

the need to establish schools for women. The short introduction before the full draft of the letter articulates that the editors decided to include it on the first page because they thought it a remarkable case.⁵ The next day, this same circular letter reappeared in the *Independent*.⁶ Because newspapers referenced each other and frequently reprinted news appearing in different papers, the message of this particular letter disseminated widely across the society. The inclusion of this circular letter in the newspaper also brought about more systematic analysis of the issue by the editors. On September 13, the *Independent* featured an editorial titled “Women’s Education.” While highlighting that it was unprecedented that women themselves called for schools for women, it argued that women’s education would benefit the country as a whole due to their role as the first educators of children. The editors also criticized the absence of government initiative in modern education.⁷ The insertion of a circular letter in the newspaper thus affected its editorial direction, which would subsequently shape public opinion. Conversely, this circular letter could have suited the editors’ political agenda. In any event, the dissemination of new ideas about women’s social role and their equal right to education stimulated women readers actually to rally together for collective actions. According to a report in the *Independent* on September 28, about one hundred women gathered to promote the cause of women’s education. Remarkably, the leader of the group began the meeting by reading aloud the very circular letter included in the newspaper.⁸ Besides this kind of circular letter, letters from Korean students studying in Japan who wrote home about the sociopolitical conditions of the country were frequently printed in newspapers.⁹ This easy transferability of information between letters and newspapers increased the role of individuals in shaping public opinion. Writing letters and reading newspapers generated a new public forum in which different individuals and organizations exchanged their viewpoints and deliberated on the issues that concerned them.¹⁰ In this discursive space, the existing collective and collaborative networks of letter writing overlapped with and proliferated through those of newspapers.

Here, as a parallel case, it is useful to examine how telegrams were incorporated into newspapers in late nineteenth-century China, which were instrumental in spreading nationalistic political messages. In the nationalist movements of this period, political telegrams held vital significance as an effective media form because they could have multiple senders and addressees. However, their effect had been substantially diminished to the regional level at best. Political circular telegrams could be widely publicized and

attract attention only after they were reprinted in newspapers.¹¹ In the same vein, the Chosŏn political epistles could have had broader impact when they took the form of newspaper articles. Readers might have kept, read, and circulated the papers for a long time, following their traditional reading pattern geared toward letters rather than the daily publication cycle of newspapers. The combination of the different temporalities embedded in circular letters and newspapers does not allow us to apply Benedict Anderson's description of "newspapers as one-day bestsellers" to the Korean context.¹²

In some rare cases, Korean political epistles appeared even in foreign newspapers. For instance, Kim Okkyun (1851–1894), a fervent advocate of Western-style political reform, appropriated a Japanese newspaper as the outlet to make his political messages available to both the Japanese public and the community of letters across East Asia. While in Japan as a political exile after the failed Kapsin coup in 1884, he barely escaped with his life in 1886 after an attack by an assassin who, Kim claimed, was sent by the Chosŏn court. Kim drafted a memorial in Japanese addressed to the Chosŏn king, condemning his shameful effort to murder him, which the *Tokyo Daily* (J. Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun) carried in full in Japanese on July 9, two days after its initial appearance in the *Gazette of the Government and the Public* (J. Chōya shinbun).¹³ Considering that Kim, as an exile abroad, could not submit this memorial to King Kojong (r. 1864–1907), his choice of the genre, language, and media outlet to publicize it seems to have been politically calculated and purposeful. By addressing the Korean king instead of the anonymous newspaper readers, Kim's memorial must have generated peculiar and exotic reading experiences for the Japanese public. However, it is also possible that Kim intended to make his memorial known to the Korean public. The *Hansŏng Gazette* (Hansŏng sunbo), the first modern Korean newspaper, published from 1883 to 1886, reprinted international news from foreign papers; the *Tokyo Daily* was one of these sources for editors.¹⁴ In fact, this newspaper article successfully stoked criticism of the Chosŏn court's attempts to terminate modernizers like Kim. The *sillok* records show that the assassin, Chi Unyŏng (1852–1935), was immediately investigated and sent into exile.¹⁵ The court concluded that Chi attempted to murder Kim out of his personal indignation against the leaders of the Kapsin coup.¹⁶ Six days after his memorial appeared in the *Tokyo Daily*, Kim's letter to Li Hongzhang (1823–1901), a powerful Qing official who Kim thought had created the assassination plan, appeared in the same newspaper.¹⁷ Unlike his

memorial written in Japanese targeting the Japanese public, this letter was written in literary Chinese, which could be read by educated people across East Asia. The usage of traditional political epistles addressed to Korean and Chinese political dignitaries in Japanese newspapers allowed Kim to garner sympathy and support for his political causes not only from the Japanese public but also from the literate population in the region who had access to this newspaper. When the old political epistolary genres appeared in modern media forms, the incongruity between the target addressees and the anonymous communicative mechanism created in the new media environment sometimes greatly amplified popular responses. When plugged into the modern newspaper, therefore, the traditional epistles generated completely new social impacts. Such a shift from one communication technology to another always entails “residue” of the older form, instead of installing disjunction and rupture between them. “Historically, new communications technologies have supplemented and transformed, rather than replaced, older ones.”¹⁸ The introduction of a new communicative mode does not simply dissolve the earlier ones, which makes forming a linear historiography about the improvements in technology more challenging.

The propagation of modern printing technology at the turn of the twentieth century also transformed the physical forms of Chosŏn political epistles and the mode of their circulation. The increase of modern printing shops entailed the incorporation of old writing practices into print capitalism. Not only were the shops eager to expand the production of new kinds of reading material for modern readers, but they also attempted to maximize their profits by printing the genres that Korean people used to handle in manuscript form. Printing shops employed aggressive promotions for this purpose. The colophons of the printed books frequently advertised that the readers could use their printing facilities for various projects. For instance, the colophon advertisement for a letter-writing manual published in 1905 enumerates a variety of printed matter that the printer could produce, including not only such modern textual forms as textbooks, magazines, certificates of graduation, and account books but also old genres such as genealogies and circular letters.¹⁹ As a consequence, some circular letters in this period began to take printed form, copies of which were distributed to members of scholarly groups (figure E.2). This new physical form of circular letters changed reading practices from group readings in turn and in public to individual readings, which subsequently caused a shift in the networking process. As modern printing methods made the existing reading culture

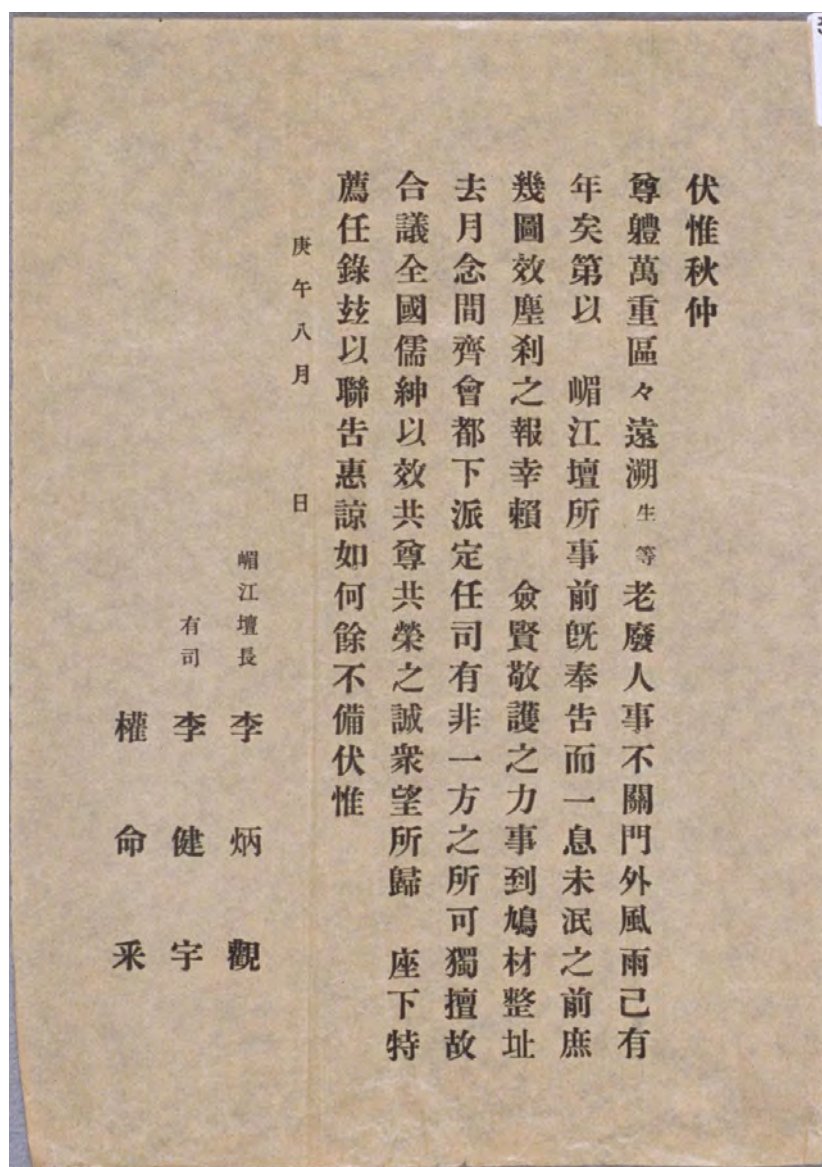


FIGURE E.2. Printed *t'ongmun* passed out to the members of Migang Academy in 1930. 26×18 cm. The Academy of Korean Studies (G002+AKS-BB55_Bo2401192E). Photo courtesy of the Jangseogak Archives at the Academy of Korean Studies (entrusted by Ansan Pugok Chinju Yu-ssi Kyōngsōngdang).

obsolete, scholarly networking delivered totally different social meanings. These old textual forms produced with modern printing technology forced their users to compromise between the old reading habits meant to maximize the utility of scant texts and the free use of ubiquitous printed matter available through mass production.

The mass production of letter-writing manuals in this period also exhibits a distinct way in which old epistles were adapted to modern printing technologies. Besides providing diverse model letters for many possible human relationships, some of the manuals also included facsimiles of calligraphic masterpieces. Intriguingly, a spiral letter appeared for the first time in a printed book, *Great Way for Reading Manuscript Letters* (Taebang ch'ogandok), despite the fact that this textual layout was no longer used in actual correspondence (figure E.3). Because the page, on which a single-page letter was printed, was folded back vertically to tie its loose ends with other pages, a single sheet was split into recto (the right page on the image) and verso (the left page on the image). The readers had to begin to read the longer vertical columns on the recto, which continued on the verso. Then they were to move on to the one line of text written on the upper margin from verso first and then to recto. They then continued to read text in the right margin written with a spiral effect. Finally, the readers were to read shorter columns

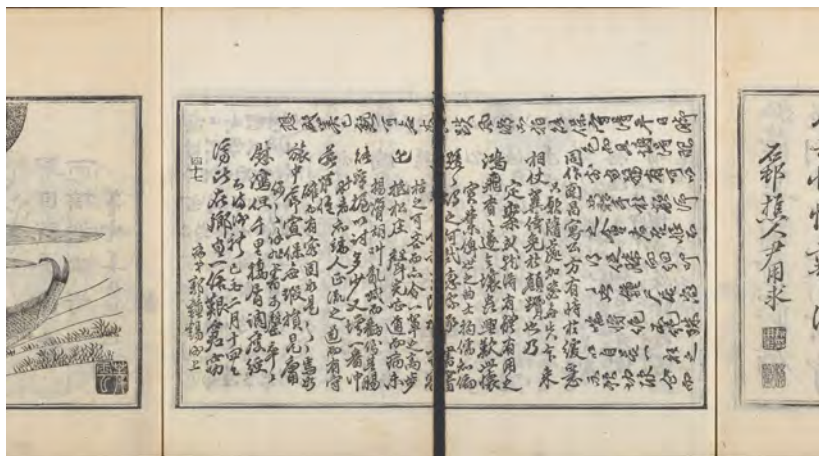


FIGURE E.3. Paek, ed., *Taebang ch'ogandok* 2:47a [right]–b [left]. Harvard-Yenching Library Rare Book TK 5973.7 2638. Courtesy of the Harvard-Yenching Library of the Harvard College Library, Harvard University. Used with permission.

interspersed between longer columns, recto first and then verso. The readers had to turn the page back and forth to follow this particular reading order. The inclusion of the vernacular textual form made reading this book a meandering experience, unlike conventional book reading. When printed books no longer represented a devernacularized and Sinicized domain amid the rise of the Korean alphabet as a national script in the early twentieth century,²⁰ the Chosŏn spiral letter ironically found its place on printed pages. Instead of instructing readers on how to compose this peculiar letter form, this spiral letter exemplified the nostalgia about the obsolete epistolary trend of the recent past.

This kind of overlap between Chosŏn epistolary culture and modern letter writing also affected the composition of letter-writing manuals published in this period. For example, Yi Kwangsu (1892–1950), one of the pioneers of modern Korean literature, wrote *Yi Kwangsu's Model Letters* (Ch'unwŏn sŏgan munbŏm) in 1939. In it, he clearly expressed his intention to disseminate his modern knowledge to readers while providing literary entertainment. About one-third of the letters in this publication are Yi's own, sent out in the past, and the rest are his fictive letters.²¹ Just as T'oebye turned to Zhu Xi's letters to disseminate Neo-Confucian knowledge, the legacy of reading letters to expand knowledge was continued even by early twentieth-century intellectuals who were saturated with Western scholarship.

Chosŏn political text forms still occasionally reappear. In August 2004, more than forty elders from northern Ch'ungch'ŏng presented their memorial to President Roh Moo-hyun (in office 2003–2008). They protested the exclusion of the region from the possible sites being considered for government institutions. They presented their memorial along with an ax, which symbolically implied their relentlessness, requesting the ruler to behead them if their claim was wrong (figure E.4). This type of political performance with an ax (*chibu sangso*) was begun during the Koryŏ dynasty by U T'ak (1263–1342)²² and was restaged twice during the Chosŏn period, respectively by Cho Hŏn (1544–1592) in 1589 and Ch'oe Ikhyŏn in 1876.²³ The historical memories of this particular political performance have been kept alive; thus, even the protesters in contemporary South Korea learned and restaged it for their purpose. After 2004, there were at least four other cases in which the presentation of memorials to the president with an ax featured contentious performances.²⁴ While the performers of the first two protests came from the conservative background of Confucian organizations, the other groups that led the latter three had no connection to Confucian



FIGURE E.4. Presentation of a memorial to the president with an ax, August 24, 2004. Photo courtesy of the *Chosun Daily*.

tradition in terms of their political identity. In particular, in the most recent case in 2014, the demonstrators calling for the expansion of the national pension system to the poor elderly wore traditional commoners' outfits. This starkly contrasted with the other cases in which protesters dressed up as Confucian literati, with scholars' caps and gowns. Although this decision to wear commoners' clothing visually emphasized the indigent economic condition of the protesters, it brushed aside the historical origin of ax memorials as a kind of political performance reserved for male Confucian elites. These protesters aimed only to make their political activism more dramatic and eye-catching through this traditional performance, regardless of the historical veracity of what they restaged.

As much as the performance with an ax caught people's attention, the emphasis on the number of participants in *maninso* holds relevance in contemporary social movements. In October 2010, the elders of the Andong area presented a joint memorial signed by 10,093 people to President Lee Myung-bak (in office 2008–2013). Its modest political message, however, did not match up with its colossal, 100-meter-long physical form (figure E.5). It pleaded for the establishment of a lifelong education center in Andong.²⁵ In



FIGURE E.5. Presentation of a *maninso* to the president at the Blue House, October 25, 2010. Photo courtesy of the *Chosun Daily*.

fact, this joint memorial was produced as part of the festival for lifelong education in northern Kyōngsang earlier in September, and the organizers dubbed it “the reenactment of Yōngnam *maninso* tradition.”²⁶ The media coverage spotlighted the *maninso* as the cultural heritage of the region; its reenactment, following the late Chosŏn protocol, demonstrates the historical sophistication of Andong as the center of Yōngnam Confucian culture. In this respect, the superficial request it makes does not seem to really matter.

Regardless of the text's actual political effectiveness, joint memorials are still considered the representative textual form of traditional political communication between the ruler and the people.

Some other activists in various social movements repurposed this direct connection with the top level of state authority through *maninso* in fashioning their political performances. In 2015, for example, the environmental movement organizations in the Kyŏngju area protested the health problems caused for nearby residents by the Wŏlsŏng Nuclear Power Plant. They demanded that the closure of the oldest reactor should be decided through a referendum. The government, however, simply ignored the protest by permitting the reoperation of the reactor. The activists decided to produce a *maninso* to intensify the case. They did recognize that this traditional political ritual, which required the citizens to sign their names with a brush along with their thumbprints, would slow down the whole process and reduce the accessibility to their movement, compared to more convenient online petition drives. At the same time, however, they emphasized that 10,181 people eventually joined in signing the *maninso* within just two months, which, they argued, testified to the Kyŏngju citizens' overwhelming objection to the government decision.²⁷ In other words, the political effectiveness of the *maninso* was not derived from the rapid dissemination of their messages or efficient mobilization of people but depended upon the cumbersome and laborious process that was materialized as the monumental text. The media coverage also explains in detail how strenuous it was to put together seventy-two sheets of paper bearing people's signatures, which were later mounted on blank sheets of paper. It took two weeks to complete this process for volunteers who joined in the effort after their full-time jobs. The task required five to eight people to work past 11:00 p.m. every night. The final product measured about ninety meters in length. The massive physical form of the *maninso* format was clearly distinguished from the signature-collecting campaigns that other social movements had previously mobilized in contemporary South Korea.²⁸ This *maninso* was actually displayed in public twice, in the Kyŏngju City Hall and in the Kwanghwamun Square in Seoul, which many news media covered as an unprecedented event. Just as nonofficial Chosŏn scholars dramatized the number of participants and the monumental physical form of *maninso* to intensify their political messages, the appropriation of this political technique in contemporary Korea allowed the protesters to attract attention from both the news media and the public.

The current written culture precipitates unprecedented patterns of political involvement. In the presidential election of 2002, Roh Moo-hyun, whom few had initially supported, won by virtue of the new communicative modes developed in Internet technology. The result of this election was not so much decided by Roh's political ideas or pledges. Instead, his supporters' domination of the campaign through the Internet transformed apolitical sectors of South Koreans, which had been already saturated with these new communicative modes, into an effective political group.²⁹ Roh's campaign vigorously propagated his messages on Internet sites that featured video clips of the candidate and audio broadcasts by celebrity supporters. Moreover, through the written communication among the supporters online, it organized the voluntary distribution and collection of "piggy banks," through which Roh raised more than 7 billion won from more than two hundred thousand individuals. The existing media forms, such as newspapers and television, reproduced the stories about all these new campaign strategies emerging on the Internet, which contributed to set the terms of this election as "opposition between reformist and conservative or between new politics and old politics."³⁰ Similarly, in Chosŏn Korea, the lifestyle of the elite class had already been saturated with epistolary culture, which was adaptable and collaborative. Their production and visualization of new types of political epistolary texts enabled them to grow into a powerful political group. Besides facilitating the delivery of opinions, the new communicative forms made addressing individual political imaginaries and confirming them in groups effortless, which sparked social actors' political ambitions. The choice and mastery of the genre best suited for the communicative mode of the given period could empower the people at the social, cultural, and political margins to generate meaningful changes in the methods of domestic communication, knowledge production, social interaction, and political participation.

Glossary

Romanization here and throughout this book represents Korean pronunciation unless marked as Chinese (Ch) or Japanese (J). In passages with mixed languages, (K) distinguishes Korean terms. In the list below, terms without glosses are personal or place names.

Akhak Kwebörm 樂學軌範 *Standard Course in the Studies of Music*

An Chöngbok 安鼎福

An Pangjun 安邦俊

An Suuk 安守旭

Andong 安東

bagua (Ch) 八卦 Eight Trigrams

ch'a 劄 entreaties

Ch'ae Chegong 蔡濟恭

Ch'ae Hongwön 蔡弘遠

ch'aja 劄子 official entreaties

ch'al (K) / **zha** (Ch) 札 wooden tablets

chamun 咨文 letters of inquiry

Chang Hünghyo 張興孝

changgye 狀啓 official missives

Ch'anggyöng Palace 昌慶宮

Changsha Zidanku Chu Boshu (Ch) 長沙子彈庫楚帛書 *The Chu Silk Manuscript* from Zidanku, Changsha

changŭi 掌議 head scholar

chapchö 雜著 miscellany section

Chasöngnok 自省錄 *Record for Self-Reflection*

Chaŭi taebi 慈懿大妃 Queen Dowager Chaŭi

Cheju 濟州島 Cheju Island
Chen Xianzhang (Ch) 陳獻章
Cheng Yi (Ch) 程頤
cheso 製疏 drafter of the memorial
chet'ong 製通 drafters of circular letters
Chi Unyŏng 池運永
chibu sangso 持斧上疏 presenting memorials with an ax
ch'ik 勅 imperial rescripts
Ch'ilchŏng 七情 Seven Emotions
Chingbo ōn'gandok 增補諺簡讀 *The Augmented and Supplemented Reading of Vernacular Letters*
chinŏn 眞言 mantras
chinsa 進士 literary licentiate
chirashi gaki (J) 散らし書き scattered writing
ch'it'ong 馳通 circulars
cho 詔 instructive writs
Cho Hanbo 曹漢輔
Cho Hŏn 趙憲
Cho Ik 趙翼
Cho Kwangjo 趙光祖
Cho Mok 趙穆
Cho Sik 曹植
chobo 朝報 court newsletters
Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn 崔致遠
Ch'oe Ikhyŏn 崔益鉉
Ch'oe Malli 崔萬理
Ch'oe Sejin 崔世珍
ch'ogi 草記 draft report
Chŏlchak t'ongp'yŏn 節約通編 *The Comprehensive Compilation of "The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters" and "The Deliberation on Selected Writings of Zhu Xi"*
Chŏlchak t'ongp'yŏn poyu 節約通編補遺 *The Comprehensive Compilation with Supplementation of Omissions*
Chŏlla 全羅 Chŏlla province
ch'ŏlli 天理 Heavenly principle
chŏllyŏng 傳令 order dispatches
ch'ŏmch'al 僉察 together, read
ch'ŏmsŏ 僉書 together, write

chõn 箋 brief (diplomatic) missives
chõng 情 human emotions and/or sentiments
Chõng Chiun 鄭之雲
Chõng Ch'õl 鄭澈
Chõng Hon 鄭焜
Chõng Hyõktong 鄭赫東
Chõng Inhong 鄭仁弘
Chõng Ku 鄭逵
Chõng Kyõngse 鄭經世
Chõng Mongju 鄭夢周
Chõng Sihan 丁時翰
Chõng T'aehwa 鄭太和
Chõng T'ak 鄭擢
Chõng T'ak 鄭琢
Chõng Tojõn 鄭道傳
Chõng Yagyong 鄭若鏞
Chõng Yõch'ang 鄭汝昌
Chõng Yuil 鄭唯一
chongdang chõlmok 宗堂節目 items agreed upon among clan members
Ch'õngdo 清道
chõn'gisu 傳奇叟 professional performers of vernacular Korean novels
Chõngjo 正祖 King Chõngjo
Chõngju 定州
Ch'õn'gok Sõwõn 川谷書院 Ch'õn'gok Academy
chõngsa 呈辭 requests of retirement
Chõngsan 定山
chõnin 專人 professional messengers for hire
chõnjok 專足 professional messengers for hire
chonjuron 尊周論 discourse on respect for the Zhou tradition
chõnmun 箋文 brief reports
Ch'õnmyõng (K) / Tianming (Ch) 天命 Mandate of Heaven
chõnp'aeng 專倅 professional messengers for hire
chõnp'yõn 轉便 a relay of ad hoc messengers
ch'õnsa 倩寫 written by proxy
Chõnsũmnok nonbyõn 傳習錄論辯 *Discussion and Critique on
 “The Record for Transmitting Learning”*
chõnũi 傳疑 transmitting questions [to posterity]
ch'õp 牒 reports

ch'öpchǒng 牒呈 official reports
ch'osa 招辭 statements of sellers and witnesses
Chosŏn 朝鮮 Chosŏn dynasty
Chōya shinbun (J) 朝野新聞 *Gazette of the Government and the Public*
Chu (Ch) 楚 Chu kingdom
Chu Sebung 周世鵬
Chuja chōnso 朱子全書 *The Complete Collection of Master Zhu Xi's Writings*
Chuja haengjang 朱子行狀 *The Record of Master Zhu Xi's Conduct*
Chuja taejŏn 朱子大全 *The Great Compendium of Master Zhu Xi's Writings*
Chuja taejŏn ch'aui 朱子大全劄疑 *The Record of Questions about "The Great Compendium of Master Zhu Xi's Writings"*
Chuja taejŏn sübyu 朱子大全拾遺 *The Collection of Omissions from "The Great Compendium of Master Zhu Xi's Writings"*
Chujasŏ chōryo 朱子書節要 *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters*
chŭkchōn 即傳 sending replies via the messengers on their way back
chŭksōn 即旋 sending replies via the messengers on their way back
Chumun chakhae 朱文酌海 *The Deliberation on Selected Writings of Zhu Xi*
Chŭngbo ōn'gandok 增補諺簡讀 *The Augmented and Supplemented Reading of Vernacular Letters*
Ch'ungch'ōng 忠清 Ch'ungch'ōng province
chungin 中人 secondary status group
Chungjong 中宗 King Chungjong
chŭngnap 即納 sending replies via the messengers on their way back
Ch'unhyang chōn 春香傳 *The Tale of Ch'unhyang*
Ch'unwŏn sŏgan munbōm 春園書簡文範 *Yi Kwangsu's Model Letters*
Chusŏ chōryo kangnok 朱書節要講錄 *The Record of Lectures on "The Abbreviated Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters"*
Chusŏ chōryo kiui 朱書節要記疑 *The Record of Questions on "The Abbreviated Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters"*
Chusŏ kangnok kanbo 朱書講錄刊補 *The Correction and Supplement of "The Record of Lectures on the 'Abbreviated Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters'"*
Chusŏ paeksŏn 朱書百選 *One Hundred Selected Letters of Zhu Xi*
Chusŏ yoryu 朱書要類 *The Categorized Essence of Zhu Xi's Letters*
ci (Ch) 詞 lyric poetry

Da Yu (Ch) 大禹 Yu the Great

Daozang (Ch) 道藏 *Daoist Canon*

Du Fu (Ch) 杜甫

fu (Ch) 賦 rhymed prose

Haeju 海州

haengjang 行狀 record of conduct

Hamch'ang 咸昌

han (K) / **han** (Ch) 翰 brush

Han (Ch) 漢 Han Dynasty

Hanhwŏn ch'arok 寒喧劄錄 *Brief Records of Letters of Regards*

Hansŏng sunbo 漢城旬報 *Hansŏng Gazette*

Hapch'ŏn 陝川

Hetu (Ch) 河圖 *The Yellow River Chart*

Heian (J) 平安 Heian period

Hŏ Kyun 許筠

Hŏ Mok 許穆

Hoeamsŏ chŏryo 晦庵書節要 *The Abbreviated Essence of Hoeam (Zhu Xi)'s Letters*

Hoeamsŏ ch'waryo 晦庵書撮要 *The Collected Essence of Hoeam (Zhu Xi)'s Letters*

hoet'ong 回通 circulars

Holgi 忽記 *The Record of Ceremonies*

Hong Ch'öyun 洪處尹

Hong Chuwŏn 洪柱元

Hong Kiltong chŏn 洪吉童傳 *The Tale of Hong Kiltong*

Hong Myŏngha 洪命夏

Hong Ponghan 洪鳳漢

Honghwa Gate 弘化門

Hongwu (Ch) 洪武 Emperor Hongwu

Hubei (Ch) 湖北 Hubei province

Hunmin chŏngŭm 訓民正音 *Correct Sound to Instruct People*

Husa yujip 候謝類輯 *The Classified Collection of Letters of Regards and Thank-You Notes*

hwairon 華夷論 discourse on the difference between the civilized and barbarians

Hwang Chaesu 黃再叟

Hwang Chini 黃眞伊

Hwang Chunnyang 黃俊良

Hwangsong sinmun 皇城新聞 *Capital Gazette*

hwanhyang 還鄉 to protest by withdrawing to hometowns

hyangch'al 鄉札 local letters

hyangga 鄉歌 Sillan folk songs

Hyanghyōnsa 鄉賢祠 Shrine for Local Worthies

hyangsarye 鄉射禮 local shooting ceremonies

hyangŭmjurye 鄉飲酒禮 local drinking ceremonies

hyangyak 鄉約 community compacts

hyobinch'e 效颦體 “scowling style” calligraphy

Hyojong 孝宗 King Hyojong

Hyōnjong 顯宗 King Hyōnjong

i 理 principles

Ich'ōn 伊川

idu 吏讀 clerk's readings

Ihak t'ongnok 理學通錄 *The Comprehensive Record of the Study of Principle*

Ijasō chōryo 李子書節要 *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Yi [T'oegye]'s Letters*

ikki (J) 一揆 popular uprisings

Im Tam 林潭

Im Yōng 林泳

Imgo Sōwōn 臨臯書院 Imgo Academy

Imjin 壬辰

Injo 仁祖 King Injo

Injong 仁宗 King Injong

inp'yōn 人便 ad hoc messengers

Insōn wanghu 仁宣王后 Queen Insōn

iryong chi kan 日用之間 in the middle of their daily practices

Jingbao (Ch) 京報 *Capital Gazette*

Jinling (Ch) 金陵

Jiugong (Ch) 九宮 Nine Palaces

Jujia Biyong Shilei Quanji (Ch) 居家必用事類全集 *The Collection of Necessary Matters Ordered for the Householder*

ka 歌 to sing
kaksŏ 各書 writing letters separately to each addressee
kamgyŏl 甘結 casual orders
kan (K), jian (Ch) 簡 bamboo strips
Kandok chŏngyo 簡牘精要 *The Essence of Letter Writing*
Kandok hoesu 簡牘會粹 *Learning the Essence of Letter Writing*
Kan'gyŏng Togam 刊經都監 Bureau of Printing Buddhist Sutras
Kansik yup'yŏn 簡式類編 *The Categorized Collection of Letter Forms*
Kapsin 甲申
karakasa renbanjŏ (J) 傘連判狀 umbrella letters
kasa 歌辭 kasa verses
ki 氣 material forces
Ki Hyojŭng 奇孝曾
Ki Taesŭng 奇大升
kibyŏl sŏri 奇別胥吏 clerks transcribing court newsletters
kiin 其人 Koryŏ elites who were held in the capital as hostages
Kim Ch'anghyŏp 金昌協
Kim Chinu 金晉佑
Kim Ch'isŏn 金致先
Kim Chŏng 金淨
Kim Chongjik 金宗直
Kim Chungch'ŏng 金中淸
Kim Chun'gŭn 金俊根
Kim Ch'wiryŏ 金就礪
Kim Handong 金翰東
Kim Han'gi 金漢起
Kim Hongdo 金弘道
Kim Inhu 金麟厚
Kim Koengp'il 金宏弼
Kim Kyegwang 金啓光
Kim Okkyun 金玉均
Kim Pongjo 金奉祖
Kim Pup'il 金富弼
Kim Puryun 金富倫
Kim Sanghŏn 金尙憲
Kim Sŏngil 金誠一
Kim Suhang 金壽恒
Kim Suhŭng 金壽興

Kim Sujŭng 金壽增
Kim Tongp'il 金東弼
Kim Ugoeng 金字宏
Kim Uong 金字顙
Kim Yung 金隆
Kim Yusin 金與信
Ko Towŏn [Go Dowon] 고도원 (1952–)
Kojong 高宗 King Kojong
komok 告目 short reports
konggio 恐記誤 the record might be wrong
kongjae 空齋 to protest by withdrawing from the dorms
kongmian 恐未安 [the argument] might not be stable
kongmiyŏn 恐未然 could not be true
kongnon 公論 public and impartial opinions
kongsagodan 恐似孤單 [the argument] might be [supported] only [by] him
kongt'aesim 恐太深 [the argument] might be too far-fetched
Koryŏ 高麗 Koryŏ dynasty
Kosan kugokka 高山九曲歌 *Nine Songs about the High Mountain*
kosim nosa 苦心勞思 straining one's mind and laboring one's thought
kugyŏl 口訣 vocal particles
kuksŏ 國書 state letters
Kŭm Nansu 琴蘭秀
Kŭm Ŭnghun 琴應壩
Kŭmjŏng 金井
Kŭmsan 錦山
kungch'e 宮體 palace-style calligraphy
Kŭnsarok 近思錄 *Reflections on Things at Hand*
kŭnsil 謹悉 preliminary reviews of memorials
Kwak Chu 郭澍
Kwanghae 光海君 Prince Kwanghae
kwanmun 關文 orders to outposts; government decision documents
Kwŏn Kŭn 權近
Kwŏn Sangha 權尙夏
Kwŏn Sangil 權相一
kwŏndang 捲堂 to protest by refusing to sign the dining hall roster
kwŏnsŏ puin 勸書婦人 Bible women
kyohwa 教化 moral edification
kyŏmin 僉人 private servants

kyŏngjaeso 京在所 local literati's liaison offices in the capital
Kyŏngju 慶州
kyŏngjung sikcha yusik chi in 京中識字游食之人 those who are literate
 but idling away in the capital
kyŏngmun 檄文 open letters
Kyŏngsang 慶尙 Kyŏngsang province
Kyosŏgwan 校書館 Office of Editorial Review
kyubang kasa 閨房歌辭 kasa verses from the inner chambers
kyuhon 叫闥 sit-ins outside the royal palace

Li Hongzhang (Ch) 李鴻章
Luoshu (Ch) 洛書 *The Luo River Script*

maemae mun'gi 賣買文記 proof of transactions
mang mi kaksŏ 忙未各書 too busy to write letters to each addressee
Mangch'ang 望昌
maninso 萬人疏 a memorial signed by ten thousand people
manyŏ changp'o chi ron, chŭk kugin chi ron 萬餘章甫之論, 即國人之論
 “The opinion of the ten thousand scholars amounts to that of the whole
 nation”
mi (Ch) 米 rice
Migang Sŏwŏn 帽江書院 Migang Academy
Ming (Ch) 明 Ming dynasty
Miryang Pak-ssi 密陽朴氏 Madam Pak from Mirayng Pak clan
mugŭk 無極 without ultimate
Muja 戊子
Munjong 文宗 King Munjong
Munjŏng 文貞 honorific title conferred upon Cho Sik posthumously
Munjŏng wanghu 文定王后 Queen Dowager Munjŏng
munkwa 文科 highest level of the civil service examination
Munmyo 文廟 Royal Confucian Shrine
Muyŏl wang 武烈王 King Muyŏl
myoch'imje 廟寢制 protocols for placing ancestral tablets in shrines
Myŏngjong 明宗 King Myŏngjong
Myŏnsŏ hwisik 俛書彙式 *Word Forms to Write Good Letters*

Na Sin'gŏl 羅臣傑
Naju 羅州

Naksŏ Hwanggŭk Kungsu Kwaewi Naewae Chi To 洛書皇極宮數卦位内外之圖 *Inner and Outer Diagrams of the August Ultimate, [Nine] Palaces, and the Positions of Trigrams in “Luoshu”*

Namin 南人 Namin faction

No Indo 盧仁度

No Kyŏngnin 盧慶麟

No Susin 盧守愼

nobae 奴輩 a group of slaves

nobian 奴婢案 slave roster

Nongsa chiksŏl 農事直說 *Straightforward Explanation of Agriculture*

Noron 老論 Noron faction

Nup'an'go 鏤板考 *Surveys on Publications*

nyang 兩 monetary unit during the Chosŏn dynasty

Ŏanjip 魚雁集 *Collected Letters*

Ohyŏn 五賢 Five Confucian Worthies

Oksan Sŏwŏn 玉山書院 Oksan Academy

Ŏnch'al kyusik 諺札規式 *The Rules and Forms of Vernacular Korean Letters*

Ŏng'andok 諺簡讀 *The Reading of Vernacular Letters*

Ŏng'an p'ilpŏp 諺簡筆法 *How to Write Vernacular Korean Letters*

Ongnam 玉男

onnade (J) 女手 feminine hand

ōraimono (J) 往來物 elementary textbooks taking the form of exchanged letters in Edo period

Ou Su Shoujian (Ch) 歐蘇手簡 *The Collected Letters by Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi*

Ouyang Xiu (Ch) 歐陽修

Pae Samik 裒三益

Pae Tŏgŏn 裒德彦

Paegundong Sŏwŏn 白雲洞書院 Paegundong Academy

p'aeji 牌旨 procuratorial letters

Paekch'ŏn Cho-ssi 白川趙氏 Madam Cho from Paekch'ŏn Cho clan

Paeksasi kyobyŏn 白沙詩教辨 *Instructive Critique of Chen Xianzhang's Poems*

p'aengin 伴人 professional messengers for hire

paesa 拜辭 to protest by retreating to the village adjacent to the Royal Academy after paying homage to the Confucian Shrine

paeso 陪疏 dispatchers of memorials to the throne
Pak Kŏn'gap 朴乾甲
Pak Kwangjŏn 朴光前
Pak Sech'ae 朴世采
palt'ong 發通 dispatchers of circular letters
panggakpon 坊刻本 commercial printing
Pangmun'guk 博文局 Bureau for the Dissemination of Texts
pokhap 伏閣 sit-ins outside the royal palace
pösŏnpon 襪線本 sock patterns
Pou 普雨
Pugin 北人 Pugin faction
puhwang 付黃 posting criminals' names on a piece of yellow paper in a street parade to defame them
pukpŏllon 北伐論 discourse on the northern expedition
p'yo 表 formal diplomatic missives
pyŏlchi 別紙 papers enclosed with letters
Pyŏn Hyŏp 邊協
pyŏng mi kaksŏ 病未各書 could not write letters to each addressee due to sickness
p'yŏnggwŏl 平闕 blank spaces within texts, which functioned as reverence marks
Pyŏngsan Sŏwŏn 屏山書院 Pyŏngsan Academy
Pyŏngsul 丙戌
P'yŏngyang 平壤

Qin (Ch) 秦 Qin dynasty
Qing (Ch) 清 Qing dynasty

rishu (Ch) 日書 day books
Ryu Ijwa 柳台佐
Ryūkyū (J) 琉球 Ryūkyū kingdom

sabal 沙鉢 bowl
Sach'il pyŏnjŭng 四七辨證 *Verifications and Proofs on the Four-Seven Debate*
Sach'il sin'pyŏn 四七新編 *The New Edition of the Four-Seven Debate*
sadae 事大 respect for superiors
Sadan 四端 Four Beginnings

Sado 思悼 Prince Sado
saengwŏn 生員 classics licentiate
sahwa 士禍 literati purges
Sahyŏn 四賢 Four Worthies
sajŏng 私情 private and biased emotion
sallok 散錄 scattered records
Samgang haengsilto 三綱行實圖 *The Illustrated Guide to the Three Relationships*
Samgye Sŏwŏn 三溪書院 Samgye Academy
Sangbok kojŭng 喪服考證 *The Evidential Research on the Mourning Garments*
Sangju 尙州
sangso 上疏 memorials
sarim 士林 backwoods scholars
sasŏl sijo 辭說時調 narrative sijo poems
sat'ong 寫通 copiers of circular letters
Sejo 世祖 King Sejo
Sejong 世宗 King Sejong
Shandong (Ch) 山東 Shandong province
Shangshu (Ch) 尚書 *The Book of History*
shesi zhuantie (Ch) 社司轉帖 *she* association circulars
Shijing (Ch) 詩經 *The Book of Poetry*
shitu (Ch) 式圖 diagram of the cosmic model
shushu (Ch) 數術 numerals and skills
Shuyi (Ch) 書儀 *The Etiquette of Letter Writing*
sijo 時調 sijo poems
Silla 新羅 Silla kingdom
sim 心 mind-and-heart
Sim Hwanji 沈煥之
Sim Tan 沈檀
Sima Guang (Ch) 司馬光
Sin Sŏkhyŏng 申碩亨
Sinch'ang Maeng-ssi 新昌孟氏 Madam Maeng from Sinch'ang Maeng clan
Sinmyo 辛卯
so (K) / **su** (Ch) 素 silk
sŏ (K) / **shu** (Ch) 書 to write, the act of writing, writing
Sŏ Myŏngbin 徐命彬

Sŏ P'irwŏn 徐必遠
Sŏ Yugu 徐有榘
Sŏak chi 西岳誌 *The Record of Sŏak Academy*
Sŏak Sŏwŏn 西岳書院 Sŏak Academy
soch'ŏng 疏廳 headquarters for the production of joint memorials by rural scholars
sodegaki (J) 袖書き sleeve writing
Sŏhaeng ilgi 西行日記 *The Daily Record of the Journey to Seoul*
Sohak (K) / **Xiaoxue** (Ch) 小學 *Elementary Learning*
Sŏin 西人 Sŏin faction
soji 所志 petition
Sojunghwa 小中華 Little Middle Kingdom
Soktam 石潭 Stone Pond
Sŏl Ch'ong 薛聰
Sŏn (K) / **Chan** (Ch) / **Zen** (J) 禪 Zen Buddhism
Song (Ch) 宋 Song dynasty
sŏng 性 human nature
Song Chun'gil 宋浚吉
Sŏng Hon 成渾
Sŏng Hyŏn 成僎
Song Kyuryŏm 宋奎濂
Song Myŏnghŭm 宋明欽
Sŏng Ŏnjip 成彦楫
Song Pyŏngp'il 宋秉弼
Song Sihyŏng 宋時瑩
Song Siyŏl 宋時烈
Sŏngbulto 成佛圖 Diagram of Achieving Buddhahood
Sŏnggyun'gwan 成均館 Royal Academy
Sŏngjong 成宗 King Sŏngjong
Sŏngju 星州
Sŏnjo 宣祖 King Sŏnjo
sŏŏl 庶孽 secondary sons
Sosu Sŏwŏn 紹修書院 Sosu Academy
Sŏwŏn ch'anggŏn yŏnjo 書院創建年條 *The List of Years of the Establishment of Academies*
sŏwŏn wanŭi 書院完議 agreement of academy scholars
Su Shi (Ch) 蘇軾
Subi Mountain 首比山

sujŏn yusa 收錢有司 money collectors
Sukchong 肅宗 King Sukchong
Sŭnggyŏngdo 陞卿圖 Diagram of Promotion in Official Positions
Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi 承政院日記 *Daily Record of the Office of the Royal Secretariat*
Sŭngnamdo 勝覽圖 Diagram of Scenic Spots
Sunjong 純宗 King Sunjong

Taebang ch'ogandok 大方草簡牘 *Great Way for Reading Manuscript Letters*
t'aegŭk 太極 supreme ultimate
Taehan maeil sinbo 大韓每日申報 *Korean Daily News*
T'aejo 太祖 King T'aejo
T'aejong 太宗 King T'aejong
taesasŏng 大司成 headmaster of the Royal Academy
Tang (Ch) 唐 Tang dynasty
tangsangji 當詳之 needs to be substantiated
T'oegye sŏnsaeng sŏ chŏryo 退溪先生書節要 *The Abbreviated Essence of Master T'oegye's Letters*
T'oegye Yi Hwang 退溪 李滉
T'oesŏ yuch'an 退書類纂 *The Classified Collection of T'oegye's Letters*
tok (K) / du (Ch) 牘 wooden panels
Tokugawa (J) 德川 Tokugawa period
Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun (J) 東京日日新聞 *Tokyo Daily*
Tonam Sŏwŏn 道南書院 Tonam Academy
Tongdaemun 東大門 Eastern Great Gate
Tongguk chŏngun 東國正韻 *The Correct Phonology of the Eastern Country*
Tonghak 東學 Eastern Learning
Tongin yesik 東人例式 *The Examples and Formats for Korean People*
tongjisa 同知事 assistant director of the Royal Academy
t'ongmun 通文 circular letters
T'ongmun so ch'o 通文疏抄 *Drafts of Circular Letters and Memorials*
Tongnip sinmun 독립신문 the Independent
Tongsa chi hak 東士之學 *The Scholarship of the Eastern Scholars*
t'ongyu 通諭 directive notes
Tosan sasungnok 陶山私淑錄 *The Record for Modeling after T'oegye*
Tosan sibigok 陶山十二曲 *Twelve Pieces of Sijo Poems on Tosan*
Tosan Sŏwŏn 陶山書院 Tosan Academy

Tosan Sōwōn sajōk 陶山書院事蹟 *The Traces of Events in Tosan Academy*

Tumop'o 豆毛浦 Tumo ferry point

tūngch'ol 登徹 to present the summary of joint memorials for royal
review

tuwen bing paiwen (Ch) 圖文並排文 picture-texts-cum-arranged-texts

U T'ak 禹倬

üi 義 righteousness

Üirye t'onghae 儀禮通解 *The Comprehensive Explanation on "Ceremonies
and Rituals"*

üiryesin 議禮臣 the official who discussed the ritual

Üllyu 乙酉

Ümsik timibang 음식디미방 *How to Know the Taste of Foods*

Un'gok 雲谷

Wang Kōn 王建

Wang Xianzhi (Ch) 王獻之

Wang Xizhi (Ch) 王羲之

Wang Yangming (Ch) 王陽明

Wanwu (Ch) 萬物 Ten Thousand Things

Wenxuan (Ch) 文選 *Selections of Refined Literature*

Wōlsōng 月城

Wuxing (Ch) 五行 Five Elements

Xia (Ch) 夏 Xia dynasty

Xie An (Ch) 謝安

Xingli daquan (Ch) 性理大全 *The Great Compendium of Nature and
Principle*

xiu (Ch) 宿 stellar lodges

Xuanjitu (Ch) 璇璣圖 *The Picture of the Turning Sphere*

Yang Sōnsaeng Sach'il Igi Wangboksō 兩先生四七理氣往復書 *The Letters
Exchanged between Two Masters on the Four-Seven and i-ki*

Yang Sōnsaeng Wangboksō 兩先生往復書 *The Letters Exchanged between
Two Masters*

Yangnyōng 讓寧大君 Grand Prince Yangnyōng

Yangsang 梁山

Yean 禮安

Yech'ŏn 醴泉
Yi Ando 李安道
Yi Chae 李栽
Yi Chehyŏn 李齊賢
Yi Chŏn 李埶
Yi Chŏng 李楨
Yi Chono 李存吾
Yi Chonyŏn 李兆年
Yi Chun 李埈
Yi Hamhyŏng 李咸亨
Yi Hang 李恒
Yi Hwiil 李徽逸
Yi Hyŏnil 李玄逸
Yi Ich'ŏm 李爾瞻
Yi Ik 李翼
Yi Inbok 李仁復
Yi Ku 李榘
Yi Kwangjwa 李光佐
Yi Kwangsu 李光洙
Yi Ŏnjŏk 李彦迪
Yi Saek 李穡
Yi Sangjŏng 李象靖
Yi Sik 李植
Yi Simyŏng 李時明
Yi Sisu 李蓍秀
Yi Sŏnggye 李成桂
Yi Tansang 李端相
Yi Tŏkhong 李德弘
Yi Tŏkhyŏng 李德馨
Yi U 李瑀
Yi Ŭngt'ae 李應台
Yijing (Ch) 易經 *The Book of Changes*
yin yang (Ch) 陰陽 yin and yang
yŏng 詠 to recite
Yŏngbong Sŏwŏn 迎鳳書院 Yŏngbong Academy
Yŏngch'ŏn 永川
Yonggung 龍宮
Yŏnghae 寧海

Yongjae ch'onghwa 慵齋叢話 *Stories Collected by Sŏng Hyŏn*
Yŏngjo 英祖 King Yŏngjo
Yongle daquan (Ch) 永樂大全 *The Great Compendium of Emperor Yongle*
Yŏngnam 嶺南 Yŏngnam area
Yŏngnam yusaeng ch'ŏng poksŏl sawŏn sangso 嶺南儒生請復設詞院上疏
 The Memorial by Yŏngnam Scholars to Call for Restoration of Academies
Yongsan Sŏwŏn 龍山書院 Yongsan Academy
Yŏnsan 燕山君 Prince Yŏnsan
Yu Chik 柳稷
Yu Chungnyŏng 柳仲郢
Yu Hujo 柳厚祚
Yu Sech'ŏl 柳世哲
Yu Simch'un 柳尋春
Yu Sŏngnyong 柳成龍
Yu Unnyong 柳雲龍
Yuan (Ch) 元 Yuan dynasty
yuja 儒者 Confucians
Yulgok Yi I 栗谷 李珣
Yulgok chŏnsŏ 栗谷全書 *The Complete Writings of Yulgok*
Yun Hyu 尹鑄
Yun Sŏndo 尹善道
Yun Sun 尹淳
Yun Tonggyu 尹東奎
Yun Tusu 尹斗壽
Yunhui (Ch) 韻會 *Mastering Phonology*
yuso chi kurye 儒疏之舊例 old examples of scholars' memorials

Zhang Ji (Ch) 張籍
Zhou (Ch) 周 Zhou dynasty
Zhoujiatai (Ch) 周家臺
Zhu Xi (Ch) 朱熹

Notes

PROLOGUE

- 1 “Ach'im p'yŏnji sogae,” in *Ko Towŏn ūi ach'im p'yŏnji*, www.godowon.com/intro/Mletter_intro.gdw (accessed 3/20/2017).
- 2 See Ko Towŏn, *Ko Towŏn ūi ach'im p'yŏnji*.
- 3 See Mauss, *The Gift*. Antje Richter has also discussed how letters as material objects played the role of gifts in early medieval China (see Richter, *Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 132–34).
- 4 Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, 160.
- 5 Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*.
- 6 Innis, *The Bias of Communication*.
- 7 On the reference function of commonplace books in early modern Europe, see Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 62–116.
- 8 Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, 155.
- 9 See Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus*.

CHAPTER 1. LETTER WRITING IN KOREAN WRITTEN CULTURE

- 1 For discussion of the intricate interactions between literary Chinese and diverse vernacular languages in East Asia, see Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*. In Korean context, Ross King also claims that the idea of diglossia oversimplifies the multilayered linguistic interactions (see King, “Ditching ‘Diglossia’”).
- 2 Richter, *Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 34–37.
- 3 Richter, *Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 35.
- 4 Pattison, “The Market for Letter Collections,” 129.
- 5 For an example showing political debates over such epistolary protocols between Chosŏn and the Ryūkyū kingdom, see Baker, “Confucianism and Civilization,” 45–47.
- 6 Ch'oe Sŭnghŭi, *Han'guk komunsŏ yŏn'gu*. For examples from Koryŏ and early Chosŏn, see Hŏ Hŭngsik, *Han'guk ūi komunsŏ*.
- 7 For instance, Emperor Hongwu (r. 1368–1398) found that the diplomatic letter that the Chosŏn court presented to him in 1395 insulted the Ming (1368–1644) dynasty.

- Hongwu demanded the Chosŏn court hand over Chŏng Tojŏn (1342–1398), who had drafted it (see Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Chungguk chŏngsa Chosŏn chŏn*, 4:35–36).
- 8 Chu Hŭi [Zhu Xi], *Chuja karye*, 156–60.
 - 9 On the development of wedding correspondence in China, see De Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Mid-Period China*.
 - 10 Ch'oe Kiho, "Hunmin chŏngŭm ch'angje e kwanhan yŏn'gu," 531–57, esp. 547.
 - 11 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 42.
 - 12 The recent discoveries of wooden strips from this period, along with inscriptions on steles, present many such examples (see Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏn kil*, 11–13).
 - 13 *Hyangch'al* was used to write down whole Korean sentences with Chinese characters and was mostly used in a Sillan poetic genre: *hyangga*. *Kugyŏl* was used to add grammatical devices, such as particles and postpositions, to help Korean readers decipher the classical Chinese texts. Although *idu* was similar to *kugyŏl* in operating principles, it was mostly used for practical and administrative purposes. Instead of phonetically accurate transcriptions, the selected Chinese characters were expected to simply evoke designated Korean morphemes (see Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏn kil*, 13–29; and Young Kyun Oh, *Engraving Virtue*, 60–61n16, 123n140).
 - 14 Noma, *Han'gŭl ŭi t'ansaeng*, 132–33.
 - 15 *Sejong sillok*, 103:19a. There is no record of the actual publication of this title as a result of this royal order.
 - 16 *Sejong sillok*, 117:22a–23b.
 - 17 *Sejo sillok*, 20:35a. See also Chŏng Chaeyŏng et al., *Han'gŭl nadŭri* 569, 56.
 - 18 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 276.
 - 19 For details about the publication of *The Illustrated Guide to the Three Relationships*, see Young Kyun Oh, *Engraving Virtue*.
 - 20 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 277.
 - 21 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 172–73.
 - 22 Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏn kil*, 62–63; Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 164.
 - 23 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 68.
 - 24 For the establishment and shutdown of this bureau, see *Sejo sillok*, 24:25b; and *Sŏngjong sillok*, 13:18a.
 - 25 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 117–18.
 - 26 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 109.
 - 27 Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia," 709, 719, and 734.
 - 28 The new writing system also affected the teaching of foreign languages. For instance, Ch'oe Sejin (1468–1542) utilized the Korean alphabet in authoring a series of Chinese language primers. The Korean alphabet was also used for the instruction of Japanese, Mongol, and Manchu that changed the mode of learning foreign languages in the late Chosŏn period (see Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏn kil*, 67–81).

- 29 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chôngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 354–83; Suh, *Naming the Local*, 2. For the titles of these medical texts, see Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏon kil*, 89–91.
- 30 Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏon kil*, 91–96.
- 31 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chôngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 388–98.
- 32 *Kojong sillok*, 32:66a.
- 33 Noma, *Han'gŭl ŭi t'ansaeng*, 297; Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏon kil*, 65.
- 34 For instance, the nineteenth-century letter-writing manual *Kandok chôngyo* includes a section on poetry exchanges, which provides basic rules for poetic rhymes and metrics derived from Du Fu's poems. See *Kandok chôngyo* ([Hansŏng]: Mugyo sinp'an, kisa [1869]), 28a–31b (Harvard-Yenching Library Rare Book, TK 5568.6 8291). For the continuing influence of the translation of Du Fu's poems on Chosŏn poetic culture, see Sin Ŭng'yŏng, "Sijo wa kasa ŭi sichŏk kwansŭp hyŏngsŏng e issŏsŏ ŭi 'Tusi ŏnhae' ŭi yŏkhal," 1–21.
- 35 *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 43:23a–24a.
- 36 Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏon kil*, 267. *The Complete Writings of Yulgok* (Yulgok chŏnsŏ) includes only a literary Chinese version of this poem, of which the annotation says, "The original was written in vernacular Korean, which Song Siyŏl translated into literary Chinese (本諺錄係宋時烈翻文)" (see Yi I, *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*, 2:41b–42b).
- 37 Some girls in elite families familiarized themselves with classics and poetry composition in literary Chinese from what they overheard from their brothers' lessons, which took place in the shared domestic space when they were young (see Chizhova, "Bodies of Texts," 63 and 69–70).
- 38 Peter H. Lee, ed., *A History of Korean Literature*, 185–88.
- 39 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chôngŭm ŭi paltalsa*, 265.
- 40 Peter H. Lee, *A History of Korean Literature*, 219–27.
- 41 Peter H. Lee, *A History of Korean Literature*, 189–90.
- 42 Peter H. Lee, *A History of Korean Literature*, 246.
- 43 Walraven, "Kasa, Communication, and Public Opinion," 201–28.
- 44 The record about Hŏ's authorship appears in Yi Sik's (1584–1647) scattered records (*sallok*). However, some question its veracity, because the collection was edited by Song Siyŏl, whose factional bias against Hŏ's Namin affiliation might have affected this record. There is no evidence supporting this suspicion, however (see Yi Sik, *T'aektang sŏnsaeng pyŏlchip*, 15:22b).
- 45 Chŏng and Si, *Chosŏn ŏnmun sillok*, 170–71.
- 46 Lee Ji-Eun, "Literacy, Sosŏl, and Women in Book Culture in Late Chosŏn Korea," 45 and 49.
- 47 Jisoo M. Kim, *The Emotions of Justice*.
- 48 Hwisang Cho, "Feeling Power in Early Chosŏn Korea," 7–32.
- 49 Hwisang Cho, "Feeling Power in Early Chosŏn Korea," 12–14.
- 50 Haboush, *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation*, 109–11. For the edict itself, see Haboush, "Royal Edicts," 21–22.
- 51 Pak Puja et al., *Han'gŭl i kŏrŏon kil*, 125.
- 52 For these examples, see Yi Sanggyu, *Han'gŭl komunsŏ yŏn'gu*, 541–605.

- 53 For an example of this, see Song Kyuryŏm's (1630–1709) letter to his slave on the management of estates, preserved in the Gyeonggi Provincial Museum. <http://musenet.ggcf.kr/archives/artwork/%EC%84%A0%EC%B0%B0>. See also Kukhak chinhŭng yŏn'gu saŏp ch'ujin wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Hoedŏk Ūjin Song-ssi Tongch'undang Song Chun'gil huson'ga p'yŏn*, 22.
- 54 Hwang Wiju et al., *Komunsŏ ro ingnŭn Yŏngnam ūi misi segye*, 94.
- 55 Yi Sanggyu, *Han'gŭl komunsŏ yŏn'gu*, 85–156.
- 56 Yi Sanggyu, *Han'gŭl komunsŏ yŏn'gu*, 157–212.
- 57 Haboush, “The Vanished Women of Korea,” 295.
- 58 Chizhova, “Bodies of Texts,” 64.
- 59 Yi Sanggyu, *Han'gŭl komunsŏ yŏn'gu*, 649–61.
- 60 Yi Sanggyu, *Han'gŭl komunsŏ yŏn'gu*, 661–65.
- 61 Chŏng Chaeyŏng et al., *Han'gŭl nadŭri* 569, 104–7.
- 62 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ūi paltalsa*, 398–99.
- 63 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ūi paltalsa*, 401.
- 64 Sŏ Kyŏnghŭi, “Kaein p'ilsabon Han'gŭl sosŏl ūi tokcha ch'wihyang kwa hyangyu pangsik,” 206 and 208–9.
- 65 Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, 105.
- 66 Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, 67–68.
- 67 Rogers, *The Diffusion of Innovations*, 11–26.
- 68 Rogers explains this by dividing social actors into five groups—innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (see Rogers, *The Diffusion of Innovations*, 279–97).
- 69 Rogers, *The Diffusion of Innovations*, 169–94.
- 70 The earliest documented record about vernacular Korean letters is dated 1451, which mentions that Prince Yangnyŏng (1394–1462) wrote a short letter using the alphabet (see *Munjong sillok*, 10:24b).
- 71 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ūi paltalsa*, 313–14.
- 72 Deuchler, “Propagating Female Virtues in Chosŏn Korea,” 142–69, esp. 152–53.
- 73 Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 149.
- 74 Song Siyŏl, *Songja taejŏn*, 187:12a.
- 75 Park, “Reception, Reappropriation and Reinvention,” 129–48, esp. 136.
- 76 Kim Sŭrong, *Hunmin chŏngŭm ūi paltalsa*, 337.
- 77 Hwisang Cho, “Embodied Literacy,” manuscript.
- 78 An, *Chŏngjo ūi pimil p'yŏnji*, 61.
- 79 Ha, *Yangban ūi sasaenghwal*, 208.
- 80 Ha, *Yangban ūi sasaenghwal*, 208.
- 81 Ha et al., eds., *Yet p'yŏnji nanmal sajŏn*, 510; Yi Insuk, “Chosŏn sidae p'yŏnji (kanch'al) ūi munhasachŏk ūiŭi,” 389–437, esp. 394.
- 82 For this example, see Haboush, trans., *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng*, 49.
- 83 These people were also called *chŏnjok* or *chŏnp'aeng*.
- 84 Rutt and Kim, trans., *Virtuous Women*, 321–22.
- 85 Secrecy in correspondence is a relatively modern notion in many cultures. For instance, women in eighteenth-century France habitually shared the letters that

- they received from their daughters to boast about their writing skills and good calligraphy. Likewise, Jane Austen (1775–1817) knew that her letters to her sister, Cassandra, were often read aloud and passed around, which made her censor them before sending them (see Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, 100; and Garfield, *To the Letter*, 220).
- 86 An, *Chǒngjo ūi pimil p’yŏnji*, 33.
- 87 An, *Chǒngjo ūi pimil p’yŏnji*, 64–65.
- 88 Derrida, *The Post Card*, 62.
- 89 Bundock, “The (Inoperative) Epistolary Community in Eliza Fenwick’s *Secresy*,” 709–20, esp. 717.
- 90 Goldberg, “The Use and Abuse of Commercial Letters from the Cairo Geniza,” 127–54, esp. 139.
- 91 Goldberg, “The Use and Abuse of Commercial Letters from the Cairo Geniza,” 135.
- 92 Haboush, “Introduction,” 1.
- 93 Barton and Hall, introduction to *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, 1.
- 94 Pattinson, “The Chidu in Late Ming and Early Qing China,” 13, qtd. from Heller, “Between Zhongfeng Mingben and Zhao Mengfu,” 113.
- 95 Derrida, *The Post Card*, 48. Ivask made a similar point in “The Letter: A Dying Art?,” 213–14.
- 96 Garfield, *To the Letter*, 206–31.
- 97 van Hensbergen, “Towards an Epistolary Discourse,” 508–18, esp. 509 and 512.
- 98 Haboush, *Epistolary Korea*, 1.
- 99 White, *Cicero in Letters*, 77.
- 100 The importation of preprinted stationery from Qing China in the late nineteenth century introduced elite letter writers to the practice of writing multiple pages for a single piece of correspondence (see Yi Kidae et al., eds., *Myǒngsǒng hwanghu Han’gŭl p’yŏnji wa Chosŏn wangsil ūi sijŏnji*).
- 101 Walraven, “Reader’s Etiquette, and Other Aspects of Book Culture in Chosŏn Korea,” qtd. from Ji-Eun Lee, “Literacy, Sosŏl, and Women in Book Culture in Late Chosŏn Korea,” 37.
- 102 See Chartier, *The Order of Books*.
- 103 Here, Maxwell Hearn’s demonstration of how to appreciate Chinese scroll paintings is suggestive. Although the logic of reading texts differed from that of savoring paintings, the scroll form shared between them as material support makes this demonstration applicable to the analysis of letter scrolls (see Harris and Cotter, “The Ancient Chinese Arts,” *New York Times*, March 17, 2011).
- 104 Pak Taehyŏn, *Hanmun sŏch’al ūi kyŏksik kwa yongŏ*, 35–36 and 50.
- 105 Pak Taehyŏn, *Hanmun sŏch’al ūi kyŏksik kwa yongŏ*, 53.
- 106 Pak Taehyŏn, *Hanmun sŏch’al ūi kyŏksik kwa yongŏ*, 54.
- 107 These titles include *Brief Records of Letters of Regards* (Hanhwŏn ch’arok) and *Learning the Essence of Letter Writing* (Kandok hoesu) from the early nineteenth century; *The Essence of Letter Writing* (Kandok chǒngyo) in 1861; *The Classified Collection of Letters of Regards and Thank-You Notes* (Husa yujip) in 1869; and *Word Forms to Write Good Letters* (Myŏnsŏ hwisik) in 1929.

- 108 Some of these titles include *The Rules and Forms of Vernacular Korean Letters* (Ōnch'al kyusik) in 1889 and *The Reading of Vernacular Letters* (Ōn'gandok), published in many different editions, such as *The Augmented and Supplemented Reading of Vernacular Letters* (Chingbo ōn'gandok) from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century and *How to Write Vernacular Korean Letters* (Ōn'gan p'ilpōp) in 1926.
- 109 Paek Tuhyōn, "Chosōn sidae yōsōng ūi muncha saenghwal yōn'gu," 64–66.
- 110 *Kandok chōngyo* ([Hansōng]: Mugyo sinp'an, kisa, [1869]), kukki 1a–6b and 28a–31b (Harvard-Yenching Library Rare Book, TK 5568.6 8291).
- 111 For discussion of the peculiar page layouts in Ming commercial publications, see Wei Shang, "Jin Ping Mei and Late Ming Print Culture," 187–238.
- 112 American letter writers also strove to define the epistolary genre while conflating it with other forms and rhetorical frames of reference (see Decker, *Epistolary Practices*, 3–17, esp. 7 and 17).

CHAPTER 2. THE RISE AND FALL OF A SPATIAL GENRE

- 1 My usage of the term "spiral letter" is inspired by Brinkley Messick's "spiral texts" in his study of Yemeni textual tradition (see Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 231–50).
- 2 Kukka kirogwōn Pogwōn yōn'gukwa, *P'yōnjiro chōnhaejin 500-nyōn ūi sarang*, 1–11.
- 3 D. F. McKenzie argues that the peculiarities of different readings can be recovered from the scrutiny of physical forms of texts. Jerome McGann claims that the interpreters of texts ought to put an equal emphasis on bibliographic codes of texts and the linguistic codes of semantic meanings, which he calls "materialist hermeneutics" (see McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 9–76; and McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 15–16).
- 4 For the discussion of the writer's "traces" left on texts and the possible reproduction of his/her presence, see Freud, "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad' (1925)," in *General Psychological Theory*, 207–12; and Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*, 196–231.
- 5 Natasha Heller has pointed out that the bodily implication involved in manuscript letters distinguishes them from printed texts. However, all manuscripts other than letters, regardless of their genres, also involve bodily implications in one way or another. Besides the bodily traces, Korean spiral letters are distinctive for the cognitive implications that they carry (see Heller, "Between Zhongfeng Mingben and Zhao Mengfu," 109–23, esp. 122).
- 6 Gibson, "Significant Space in Manuscript Letters," 1–10; Sternberg, "Epistolary Ceremonial," 33–88.
- 7 Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 50.
- 8 Camille, *Images on the Edge*.
- 9 For a study of the functions of margins in Western book culture, see Jackson, *Marginalia*.

- 10 Likewise, it was only foreign travelers to Yemen who found Yemeni spiral texts
eccentric, which led them to record them (see Messick, *The Calligraphic State*,
231–34).
- 11 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 31.
- 12 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*.
- 13 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts."
- 14 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11; Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," 208.
- 15 Mt. Pleasant et al., "Materials and Methods in Native American and Indigenous
Studies," 207–36.
- 16 For a similar case, see Seymour, "Epistolary Emotions," 149–50.
- 17 Cho Hangböm, *Chuhae Sunch'ön Kim-ssi myo ch'ult'o kanch'al*.
- 18 Paek Tuhyön, *Hyönp'ung Kwak-ssi öng'an chuhae*.
- 19 Andong Taehakkyo Pangmulgwan, *Andong Chöngsang-dong Ilsön Mun-ssi wa Yi
Üngt'ae myo palgul chosa pogosö*.
- 20 Cho Hangböm, *Chuhae Sunch'ön Kim-ssi myo ch'ult'o kanch'al*, 6.
- 21 Chöng Sünghye, "Chosön t'ongsa ka namgin Taema-do üi p'yönji e taehayö," 219–50.
- 22 Ben Kafka demonstrates that the uncontrollable surge of paperwork in government
functions required ministers to hire more clerks, which subsequently lowered the
general quality of state administration. The *chungin* class emerged in Chosön for
the same reason, to perform petty government functions. However, they cultivated
both intellectual and cultural sophistication that matched the *yangban* elites rather
than lowering the quality of state services (see Kafka, *The Demon of Writing*, 92).
- 23 Kang Myönggwan, *Chosön hugi yöhang munhak yön'gu*, 42–45.
- 24 A literacy survey by the Japanese colonial government in 1930 shows that
77.73 percent of the Korean population was illiterate in vernacular Korean script.
Although we have to consider the political calculation of Japanese colonizers in
interpreting this information, it does not seem possible that Chosön society enjoyed
the modern literacy rate even in vernacular Korean, let alone in literary Chinese
(see Michael Kim, "Literary Production, Circulating Libraries, and Private Publish-
ing," 18–19).
- 25 Pollock, "India in the Vernacular Millennium," 46.
- 26 Burglund, *The Secret of Luo Shu*, 56.
- 27 Burglund, *The Secret of Luo Shu*, 22.
- 28 Such examples include the day books (*rishu*), part of the bamboo-strip occult mis-
cellanies discovered in the Zhoujiatai tomb 30 in Hubei. They include a large circu-
lar diagram that "correlates stems, branches, agents, spatial directions, and times of
the day with the celestial ring of twenty-eight stellar lodges (*xiu*)" (see Harper, "The
Textual Form of Knowledge," 60–61).
- 29 My description here follows Rao Zongyi's interpretation. He understands this man-
uscript as an astronomical text discussing activities of the months. Li Ling, how-
ever, understands it as the oldest manuscript on numerals and skills (*shushu*) (see
Chaves et al., "Discussion," 176–84).
- 30 Chaves et al., "Discussion," 178.

- 31 Wikipedia entry on “Chu silk manuscript,” accessed November 29, 2018.
- 32 Huang, “Changsha Zidanku Chuboshu de fangxiang,” in *Bamboo and Silk Manuscripts Blog*, accessed November 30, 2018, www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=1092.
- 33 Chen, *Jianbo yanjiu wengao*, 339, qtd. in Huang, “Changsha Zidanku Chuboshu de fangxiang.”
- 34 Wang, “Patterns above and Within,” 49.
- 35 Citing Schuyler Cammann, Burglund argues that *Luoshu* and *Hetu* were not brought to public notice until the Song dynasty. However, Eugene Wang’s analysis suggests that the astrographical references derived from them had been already widely circulated (see Burglund, *The Secret of Luo Shu*, 168).
- 36 Wang, “Patterns above and Within,” 58.
- 37 Wang, “Patterns above and Within,” 59.
- 38 Wang, “Patterns above and Within,” 82; Burglund, *The Secret of Luo Shu*, 222–35.
- 39 For more discussion of the origins of Korean spiral letters, see Hwisang Cho, “Embodied Literacy,” manuscript.
- 40 Gatten, “Fact, Fiction and Heian Literary Prose,” 153–95.
- 41 Gatten, “Fact, Fiction and Heian Literary Prose,” 162.
- 42 Sato, *Japanese Calligraphy*, 86 and 88.
- 43 LaMarre, *Uncovering Heian Japan*, 113–15.
- 44 Lee Eun-Joo et al., “Eung Tae’s Tomb,” 145–56; Son Kye Young, “Chosŏn sidae sijŏnji sayong kwa sijŏn munhwa ūi hwaksan,” 187–209; Yi Chongdŏk, “Chosŏn sidae Han’gŭl p’yŏnji ūi t’ŭksŏng kwa p’ilsa hyŏngsik,” 154–67.
- 45 Kim Hyo Kyung, “Chosŏn sidae kanch’al sŏsik yŏn’gu,” 103–4.
- 46 For instance, Eliza Leslie’s behavior guide for American women published in 1859 condemns the practice of crossing letters as a violation of politeness and courtesy, as the postage rates were currently affordable enough for everyone to pay (see Mahoney, “More Than an Accomplishment,” 416).
- 47 Some spiral texts have been also found in Arabic diplomatic letters preserved in Spain (see Subirà, *The History of Paper in Spain*, 220–22).
- 48 Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 237.
- 49 Chinese letter writers also occasionally wrote on the backs of pages. For instance, Wang Xianzhi (344–386), the youngest son of a well-known calligrapher, Wang Xizhi (303–361), sent a letter to Xie An (320–385) expecting that Xie would keep it for its calligraphic value. Xie, however, wrote his reply on the back of the page and returned it immediately, and Xianzhi resented this. Xie’s reply using the back page slighted Wang by returning his gift of calligraphy (see Richter, “Beyond Calligraphy,” 397).
- 50 Hay, “The Human Body as a Microcosmic Source of Macrocosmic Values in Calligraphy,” 179–211.
- 51 Chizhova, “Bodies of Texts,” 67.
- 52 In both Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, the cursive writing style is considered to have developed for efficiency in letter writing (see Ledderose, “Chinese Calligraphy,” 36; and Shimizu, “The Historical Dimension,” 9).

- 53 “Ŏn’gan sayong ŭi hwaksan kwajŏng,” in Ŏn’gan, Digital Hangeul Museum. <http://archives.hangeul.go.kr/hangeul/living/view/66?page=1> (accessed 4/7/2016).
 - 54 See Haboush, “The Vanished Women of Korea,” 292, 295; and Yi Kidae et al., eds., *Myŏngsŏng hwanghu Han’gŭl p’yŏnji wa Chosŏn wangsil ŭi sijŏnji*.
 - 55 Davis, “Printing and the People,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, by Davis, 201–2.
 - 56 Sŏng, *Yongjae ch’onghwa*, trans. Nam, 361–62.
 - 57 Kim Chun’gŭn’s (d.u.) painting *Playing the Diagram of Promotion in Official Positions* (Chonggyŏngdo ch’inŭn moyang) actually shows people sitting around the board game and playing it together (see the entry on Kim at the Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0008270#>).
 - 58 Yi Wŏnbok et al., eds., *Chosŏn sidae p’ungsokhwa*, 192, 304–5.
 - 59 In another painting included in the same album, titled *Weaving the Mat* (Chari tchagi), he painted a boy reading a book. Although the book in this painting has the lines placed between text, no text was actually added. Kim Chun’gŭn also did not draw the texts in the board game.
 - 60 Han’guk Koganch’al Yŏn’guhoe, ed., *Yet munin tŭl ŭi ch’osŏ kanch’al*, 14–15.
 - 61 Ha et al., eds., *Yet p’yŏnji nanmal sajŏn*, 35.
 - 62 Ahroni, *The Jews of the British Crown Colony of Aden*, 172; Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 181; Olszowy-Schlanger, “Learning to Read and Write in Medieval Egypt,” 47–69.
 - 63 Dyson, “Unfashionable Pursuits,” 53.
 - 64 The earliest manuscript letter bearing boomerang form that I found was written by Yun Tusu (1533–1601) in 1585. However, all other examples were produced after the nineteenth century. For the example of 1585, see Han’guk Koganch’al Yŏn’guhoe, trans. and ed., *Ch’ŏnggwanjae sojang sŏhwaga tŭl ŭi kanch’al*, 26–27.
- The only non-Korean example of this kind of interspersed writing appears on a bronze vessel produced in ancient China. Tsuen-Hsiun Tsien explains that “the text is read in alternate lines, that is, the first, third, and fifth lines read from top to bottom, but the second and fourth lines from bottom to top.” I could not discover any cultural connection between Korean spiral letters and these inscriptions on Chinese bronze vessels. Moreover, no Chinese texts after this period bears such idiosyncratic forms (Tsien, *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, 44–45).
- 65 Austen, *Emma*, 51.
 - 66 Lutz, *The Brontë Cabinet*, 123–56.
 - 67 “Flip Your Text Upside Down,” www.fliptext.info.
 - 68 Brian Stock defines “textual community” as the imposition of written words to articulate the identity of a certain group of social actors. Building on his idea, I consider the spatial layout and the synchronization of physical movements between writers and readers as the textual glue bonding them as a community (see Stock, *Listening for the Text*).
 - 69 This idea was inspired by Jonathan Sterne’s discussion of the interaction between technologies and social environments (see Sterne, “Bourdieu, Technique, and Technology,” 367–89).

- 70 *Sejong sillok*, 103:19a–22a, esp. 20b in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*, vol. 4.
- 71 The use of the Korean alphabet could not be completely discouraged in actual government functions. JaHyun Kim Haboush's study of the Imjin War (1592–98), for instance, shows how the Chosŏn government used vernacular Korean script in official writings, fearing leakage of information to both Japanese enemies and the Chinese military (see Haboush, *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation*, 93–119).
- 72 Similarly, Emmanuel Yi Pastreich argues that narratives written in vernacular Korean modeled after literary Chinese narratives both stylistically and lexicographically rather than reflecting the spoken languages. Only readers with deep understanding of literary Chinese classical tradition could understand vernacular Korean narratives easily. This argument is informative in comprehending the mutual influences between cultures embedded respectively in vernacular Korean script and literary Chinese. For more details, see Pastreich, "The Transmission and Translation of Chinese Vernacular Narrative in Chosŏn Korea," 75–105.
- 73 LaMarre, "Writing Doubled Over, Broken," 250–73.
- 74 Yoda, "Literary History against the National Frame, or Gender and the Emergence of Heian Kana Writing," 465–97.
- 75 Han'gukhak Chungang Yŏn'guwŏn, ed., *Kwangju An-ssi Sunam An Chŏngbok chongga kojŏnjŏk*, 32.
- 76 Han'guk koganch'al yŏn'guhoe, ed., *Yet munin tŭl ūi ch'osŏ kanch'al*, 122–23.
- 77 The only publication that includes the printed spiral letter is Paek Tuyong, ed., *Taebang ch'ogandok*. Kyŏngsŏng: Hannam Sŏrim, Taishō 10 (1921)), 2:47a–b, Harvard-Yenching Library Rare Book TK 5973.7 2638 (see figure E.3).
- 78 Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*, 59.
- 79 *Sunam chip*, 6:40a–b.
- 80 *Chŏnggwanjae chip*, 8:1b–2a.
- 81 Fujimoto, "Chōsen giji kanbun ni tsuite," 81–82.
- 82 See Ryu, *Han'gŭl hwalcha ūi t'ansaeng, 1820–1945*, 336–37.
- 83 Strewn, "Protestant Bible Education for Women," 99–121. For discussion of Catholic priests' reluctance to embrace vernacular Korean, see Baker, "The Transformation of the Catholic Church in Korea," 11–42.
- 84 Ross King, "Western Protestant Missionaries and the Origins of Korean Language Modernization," 7–38.
- 85 Galambos, "Punctuation Marks in Medieval Chinese Manuscripts," 341.
- 86 Galambos, "Punctuation Marks in Medieval Chinese Manuscripts," 354–55.
- 87 Ross, *Corean Primer*.
- 88 Hulbert, "Commas or Spacing," 39.
- 89 "Nonsyŏl," *Tongnip sinmun*, April 7, 1896, 1–2.
- 90 Saenger, *Space between Words*.
- 91 Later, the editorial in the first pure Korean issue of the *Korean Daily News* (*Taehan maeil sinbo*) also claimed that the strenuous and time-consuming process of learning literary Chinese hindered the spread of common knowledge in Korea, which would be essential for national independence (see "Sasyŏl," *Taehan maeil sinbo*, May 23, 1907, 1).

CHAPTER 3. LETTERS IN THE KOREAN NEO-CONFUCIAN TRADITION

- 1 See a similar point made by Pierre Bourdieu about everyday practices (Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 51).
- 2 Haboush, "The Confucianization of Korean Society," 84–110.
- 3 For the most recent scholarship on this subject, see Deuchler, *Under the Ancestors' Eyes*.
- 4 Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*.
- 5 Palais, "Confucianism and the Aristocratic/Bureaucratic Balance in Korea," 427–68.
- 6 See Song, *Chosŏn sahoesa yŏn'gu*; and Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*.
- 7 Clark, "Sino-Korean Tributary Relations under the Ming," 272–300; Sixiang Wang, "Co-constructing Empire in Early Chosŏn Korea."
- 8 Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Chungguk chŏngsa Chŏson chŏn*, 4:29–31.
- 9 Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Chungguk chŏngsa Chŏson chŏn*, 4:34–35. See also *T'aejo sillok*, 3:3b–4a.
- 10 Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, *Chungguk chŏngsa Chŏson chŏn*, 4:35–36. See also *T'aejo sillok*, 9: 9a–b.
- 11 In 1396, the Chosŏn court sent Kwŏn Kŭn, Chŏng T'ak (1363–1423), and No Indo (?–?) instead of Chŏng Tojŏn, pleading Chŏng's illness. Kwŏn and No had been detained in Jinling, and Kwŏn's literary talent, revealed in his poems composed at Emperor Hongwu's request, caused the emperor's attitude toward Chosŏn to turn positive. For the poems, see *Yangch'on chip*, 1:1a–9a.
- 12 In 1397, Hongwu again reproved the Chosŏn envoy for the literary flaws in the diplomatic document and detained him (see Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Chungguk chŏngsa Chŏson chŏn*, 4:36).
- 13 Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia, 221 BC–907 AD*, 30–77.
- 14 Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, ed., *Chungguk chŏngsa Chŏson chŏn*, 4:37.
- 15 Tsien, "Paper and Printing (Part I)," 345. A few Korean scholars passed the Ming civil examinations in the early fifteenth century. We need close studies on this contrast between the ban of Korean scholars from Ming state schools and the success of Korean scholars in the Ming civil examinations (see Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, 132).
- 16 *Sejong sillok*, 61:47b.
- 17 *Sejong sillok*, 69:18b–19a.
- 18 The Chinese authorities have attempted to control the export of books for political reasons since the Song period. However, smuggling books to foreign countries for profit was rampant throughout the early modern period (see Edgren, "China," 106).
- 19 Deuchler, "Reject the False and Uphold the Straight," 377–78.
- 20 Deuchler, "Reject the False and Uphold the Straight," 401–2.
- 21 This collection had been brought to Korea three times before the reign of King Munjong (r. 1450–1452); however, it had not been printed until 1523 (see Yi Sangha, "'Chujasŏ chŏryo' ka Chosŏn cho e kkich'in yŏnghyang," 5–38).

- 22 *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 42:3b–4a.
- 23 *Chujasŏ chŏryo sŏ*, 1a–b.
- 24 *Chujasŏ chŏryo sŏ*, 2b–3a.
- 25 For the relationship between anthologists and their readers, see Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*, 69.
- 26 Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” 3–53.
- 27 Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” 49.
- 28 Gordon, “Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas,” 42.
- 29 Altman, “The Letter Book as a Literary Institution, 1539–1789,” 19.
- 30 See *Instructive Critique of Chen Xianzhang’s Poems* (Paeksasi kyobyŏn) and *Discussion and Critique on “Record for Transmitting Learning”* (Chŏnsŭmnok nonbyŏn) in *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 41:23a–23b and 41:23b–29b.
- 31 *T'oegye sŏnsaeng sokchip*, 8:1a–3a.
- 32 Blair, “Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload, ca. 1550–1700,” 11–28, esp. 12.
- 33 *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 20:20b.
- 34 St. Clair, “Political Economy of Reading,” 11.
- 35 *Chujasŏ chŏryo sŏ*, 2a–b.
- 36 Kang Chinsŏk, “T'oegye ‘Chujasŏ chŏryo’ p'yŏnjip ŭi pangbŏpchŏk t'ŭkching kwa ŭiŭi,” 51–94; Ryu Chunp'il, “T'oegye ‘Chujasŏ chŏryo’ ŭi Chuja munhŏn p'yŏnjip pangsik,” 95–121.
- 37 For a similar case, see White, *Cicero in Letters*, 34.
- 38 Yi Sangha, “Haeje,” in *Chujasŏ chŏryo*, 1:11–20.
- 39 These quasi-public letters were no different from essays, persuasive and explicatory in content (see Pattinson, “Privacy and Letter Writing in Han and Six Dynasties China,” 97–118).
- 40 Derrida, “This Is Not an Oral Footnote,” 197.
- 41 Mayali, “For a Political Economy of Annotation,” 190.
- 42 *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 35:11a.
- 43 Genette, *Paratexts*.
- 44 *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 20:14b–15a.
- 45 See Jardine and Grafton, “Studied for Action,” 30–78, esp. 30–31.
- 46 Chartier, *The Order of Books*, viii.
- 47 McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 13.
- 48 Yi Sangha, “‘Chujasŏ chŏryo’ ka Chosŏn cho e kkich' in yŏnghyang,” 6.
- 49 Sŏ Chŏngmun, “Chosŏn chunggi ŭi munjip p'yŏn'gan kwa munp'a hyŏngsŏng,” 144.
- 50 Yi Hwang, *Yŏkchu Yi T'oegye ŭi Chasŏngnok*, 37.
- 51 Yi Hwang, *Yŏkchu Yi T'oegye ŭi Chasŏngnok*.
- 52 Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*.
- 53 Ching, trans., *The Philosophical Letters of Wang Yang-ming*.
- 54 For instance, Yi Ōnjŏk and Cho Hanbo (d.u.) debated on the relationship between “supreme ultimate” (t'aegŭk) and “without ultimate” (mugŭk) in their letters exchanged in the early sixteenth century. However, their debate was not as widespread

- and influential as that between T'oegye and Ki (see Hwang Chunyŏn, "Yi Ŏnjŏk ũi mugŭk t'aegŭk sŏl nonbyŏn," 31–56).
- 55 The Four Beginnings are the dispositions of commiseration, shame and dislike of evil, yielding and deference, and approving of good and disapproving of evil. Joy, anger, grief, fear, love, hate, and desire compose the Seven Chŏng.
- 56 T'oegye shared these letters with Chŏng Yuil (1533–1576) and Kim Ch'wiryŏ (1538–?) (see *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 25:4b–9a; 25:14b–16a; 25:22b–24b; 30:7b–8a; 30:23b–25b).
- 57 T'oegye's letter to Ki in 1560, for instance, mentions that he did not seal the letter because Chŏng Chiun (1509–1561) wanted to read it (see *T'oegye sŏnsaeng sokchip*, 3:35a).
- 58 The letters were frequently shared among people other than addressees in *ancien régime* France to cement, maintain, and extend the bonds of social life and solidarity (see Chartier, Boureau, and Dauphin, eds., *Correspondence*, 15).
- 59 Hwisang Cho, "The Epistolary Brush," 1055–81, esp. 1060–61.
- 60 Chung, trans. and ed., *A Korean Confucian Way of Life and Thought*, 19.
- 61 *Yang sŏnsaeng wangboksŏ*, 3:58a–59a.
- 62 Kang Chinsŏk, "T'oegye 'Chujasŏ chŏryo' p'yŏnjip ũi pangbŏpchŏk t'ŭkching kwa ũiŭi," 73; Ryu T'agil, "'Chujasŏ chŏryo' chusŏk ũi maengnak kwa kŭ chusŏksŏ tŭl," 5–22.
- 63 *T'oedo sŏnsaeng ŏnhaeng t'ongnok*, 2:17a.
- 64 *T'oedo sŏnsaeng ŏnhaeng t'ongnok*, 2:7a–b.
- 65 *T'oedo sŏnsaeng ŏnhaeng t'ongnok*, 2:8a–b.
- 66 Yun Pyŏngt'ae, "T'oegye ũi chŏsŏ wa kŭ kanhaeng," 83–155, esp. 91.
- 67 *Han'gang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 12:2a.
- 68 *Tonggang chip*, 12:21b.
- 69 Pak Kyunsŏp, "Ugye ũi Chujasŏ ihae wa mundo kyoyuk ũi p'yojun," 79–108.
- 70 Chŏng Ch'ŏl, *Songgang Yugo* (ha), 6b.
- 71 Ryu T'agil, "'Chujasŏ chŏryo' ũi p'yŏnch'an yut'ong kwa Pak Kwangjŏn ũi wich'i," 97–136.
- 72 *T'oedo sŏnsaeng ŏnhaeng t'ongnok*, 2:8a.
- 73 Although it seems that T'oegye and Pak had exchanged letters extensively, only one of them is extant (see *T'oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 15: 40a–b).
- 74 *Chukch'ŏn chip*, 7: 2b.
- 75 *Wŏlgan sŏnsaeng munjip sŏ*, 1a–8a. See also *Taesŏn sŏnsaeng munjip*, 44:8a–10a.
- 76 Ryu T'agil suggests that Kim Sŏngil published this anthology in 1586, as the magistrate of Naju, based upon the record about Kim's life. This version, however, is no longer extant (see Ryu T'agil, "'Chujasŏ chŏryo' ũi p'yŏnch'an yut'ong kwa Pak Kwangjŏn ũi wich'i," 97–136; see also *Hakpong sŏnsaeng munjip purok*, 1:15a–b).
- 77 *The Record of Lectures* preserved in the Kyujanggak archive includes only eight chapters. The end of the eighth chapter states that Yi Tŏkhong compiled these chapters. It is believed that Yi Hamhyŏng (1550–1586) compiled the twelve missing chapters (see Yi Sangha, "'Chujasŏ chŏryo' ka Chosŏn cho e kkich'in yŏnghyang," 8–9).

- 78 Ryu T'agil, "'Chujasö chöryo' üi chusöksö e taehayö," 45–62.
- 79 *Ubok sönsaeng pyölchip*, 5:7b–8a.
- 80 *Chumun chakhae pal*, 3a–b.
- 81 Kang Munsik, "Song Siyöl üi 'Chuja taejön' yön'gu wa p'yönch'an," 71–95.
- 82 *Songja taejön*, 139 (sö):42b–43b.
- 83 Ryu, "Chujasö chöryo üi p'yönch'an kanhaeng kwa kü huhyang," xviii–xix.
- 84 *Songja taejön*, 139 (sö):43b.
- 85 U Kyöngsöp, "'Chuja taejön sübyu' Haejae," 20.
- 86 *Chusö yoryu sö*, 1b.
- 87 Kang Munsik, "Cho Ik üi hangmun kyönghyang kwa 'Chusö yoryu' p'yönch'an üi üüi," 97–133.
- 88 *Miram sönsaeng munjip*, 12:14b–16a.
- 89 Kim Chunsik, "'Chusö paeksön' üi pönyök e puch'im," 33–37.
- 90 *Udam sönsaeng munjip*, 7:1a–2b (*Sach'il pyönjüng sö*).
- 91 *Söngho sönsaeng chönjip*, 49:18b–20b, especially 19b (*Sach'il sinp'yön sö*).
- 92 *Söngho sönsaeng chönjip*, 54:27a–32a (*Sach'il sinp'yön husöl*).
- 93 *Ijasö chöryo pal*, 1a–2a.
- 94 *Ijasö chöryo sö*, 1a–2a.
- 95 *Ijasö chöryo pal*, 1a.
- 96 *Miram sönsaeng munjip*, 24:33a.
- 97 *Ch'öngdae sönsaeng munjip*, 7:10b–11b.
- 98 *Söngho sönsaeng chönjip*, 13:25a–28b, esp. 25b–26a.
- 99 Hwisang Cho, "The Community of Letters," 260–337.
- 100 *Yöyudang chönsö, che 1-chip*, 22:1a–12a, esp. 1a.
- 101 Richter, "Letters and Letter Writing in Early Medieval China," 1–29.
- 102 Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 203.
- 103 Richter, *Letters and Epistolary Culture in Early Medieval China*, 6.
- 104 McDermott, *A Social History of the Chinese Book*, 65.

CHAPTER 4. EPISTOLARY PRACTICES AND TEXTUAL CULTURE IN THE ACADEMY MOVEMENT

- 1 *Sarim*, literally meaning "backwoods scholars," has been considered a group of Chosön scholars who inherited the ethos of those Confucians who kept fidelity to the Koryö and retreated to the countryside, where they delved into scholarship. Martina Deuchler, however, has shown that fewer than half of *sarim* scholars originated from Kyöngsang, whereas the other half had lived in the capital and its environs. Regardless of their different regional origins, *sarim* scholars' emphasis on unwavering loyalty motivated them to advocate Confucian ethical principles and called for their implementation in politics. The academic lineage of this group had been constructed beginning in the sixteenth century (see Yi Sugön, *Yöngnam sarimp'a üi hyöngsöng*; Yi Sugön, *Yöngnam hakp'a üi hyöngsöng kwa chön'gae*; and Deuchler, *Under the Ancestors' Eyes*, 74).
- 2 Wagner, *The Literati Purges*.

- 3 T'oegye was involved in the establishment of at least ten academies from 1549
(see Chŏng Manjo, *Chosŏn sidae sŏwŏn yŏn'gu*, 40–41).
- 4 Hejtmanek, "The Elusive Path to Sagehood," 251–59; Chŏng Manjo, *Chosŏn sidae
sŏwŏn yŏn'gu*, 23–32.
- 5 Chŏng Manjo, *Chosŏn sidae sŏwŏn yŏn'gu*, 36.
- 6 Chŏng Sunmok in Hejtmanek, "Sŏwŏn in Chosŏn Korea, 1543–1741," 280–81.
- 7 Yi Sŏngmu, "The Influence of Neo-Confucianism on Education and the Civil
Service Examination System in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Korea,"
125–60.
- 8 Duncan, "Examinations and Orthodoxy in Chosŏn Dynasty Korea," 80 and 93–94.
- 9 Chŏn, "Chosŏn hugi ūi kyosaeng," 281–318.
- 10 The number of local academies ranges from 582 to 701 in different statistics pro-
duced in the late Chosŏn period. Two statistics produced during the Japanese colo-
nial period indicate 680 and 684, respectively (see Yun Hŭimyŏn, "Chosŏn sidae
sŏwŏn chŏngch'aek kwa sŏwŏn ūi sŏllip silt'ae," 77).
- 11 Yi Sugŏn, *Yŏngnam sarimp'a ūi hyŏngsŏng*, 152–53.
- 12 Yi T'aejin, *Han'guk yugyo sahoe saron*, 111.
- 13 Palais, "Political Leadership and the Yangban in the Chosŏn Dynasty," 400.
- 14 Yi T'aejin, *Han'guk yugyo sahoe saron*, 111.
- 15 Yi T'aejin, *Han'guk yugyo sahoe saron*, 92; Kim Hyŏnyŏng, *Chosŏn sidae ūi yangban
kwa hyangch'on sahoe*, 445.
- 16 T'oegye *sŏnsaeng munjip*, 9:4a–8b.
- 17 *Myŏngjong sillok*, 10:6a–b and 10:12a.
- 18 The Chosŏn court granted official charters to 270 academies until the official aboli-
tion of academies in 1873.
- 19 Yun Hŭimyŏn, "Honam chiyŏk ūi sŏwŏn kwa sarim munhwa," 118.
- 20 Najita, *Visions of Virtue in Tokugawa Japan*, 76.
- 21 Elman, "Rethinking 'Confucianism' and 'Neo-Confucianism' in Modern Chinese
History," 542.
- 22 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.
- 23 Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 56–80.
- 24 Berry, *Japan in Print*, 249.
- 25 Haboush, "Academies and Civil Society in Chosŏn Korea," 381–90. For the debate
on the issue of civil society in pre-twentieth-century Korea, see Hein Cho, "The
Historical Origin of Civil Society in Korea," 24–41; Duncan, "The Problematic
Modernity of Confucianism," 36–56; and Koo, "The Origins of Public Sphere and
Civil Society," 381–409.
- 26 Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*
- 27 Walton, "Southern Sung Academies as Sacred Places," 338 and 352.
- 28 Chŏng Kich'ŏl, "17-segi sarim ūi 'myoch'imje' insik kwa sŏwŏn yŏnggŏn," 118, 310,
349–50.
- 29 Chŏng Kich'ŏl, "17-segi sarim ūi 'myoch'imje' insik kwa sŏwŏn yŏnggŏn," 349–50.
- 30 Walton, *Academies and Society in Southern Sung China*, 113.
- 31 *Kŭmgye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 7:50a–b.

- 32 *Kūmgŭe sōnsaeng munjip*, 7:47a.
- 33 *Kūmgŭe sōnsaeng munjip*, 7:47a.
- 34 *Kūmgŭe sōnsaeng munjip*, 7:47a–b.
- 35 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 12:4a–b.
- 36 *Kūmgŭe sōnsaeng munjip*, 7:47b.
- 37 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 12:4b–6a.
- 38 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 12:7b.
- 39 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 12:7b–8a.
- 40 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 20:11b–12b.
- 41 *Kūmgŭe sōnsaeng munjip*, 4:17a–b.
- 42 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 20:8a–9b.
- 43 Chōng Ku, *Kugyōk Han'gang chip*, 1:98–99.
- 44 Chōng Ku, ed., *Kugyōk Kyōngghyōnnok*, 217–23.
- 45 Chōng Ku, *Kugyōk Han'gang chip*, 1:98–99.
- 46 Chōng Ku, *Kugyōk Han'gang chip*, 1:99–101.
- 47 *Kuam sōnsaeng munjip*, 2:3b.
- 48 *Kuam sōnsaeng munjip*, 2:9a–9b.
- 49 Chōng Kūkhū, *Sōak chí*, 1a–b.
- 50 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 21:29b–32a.
- 51 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 21:35b–36a.
- 52 *T'oegye sōnsaeng sokchip*, 4:19b–20a.
- 53 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 20:23b–24a.
- 54 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 22:6b–7a.
- 55 *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 39:14b–17b.
- 56 Pu, *Chosŏn sidae panggakpon ch'ulp'an yŏn'gu*, 25–26, 56.
- 57 Sin Yangsŏn, *Chosŏn hugi sŏjisa yŏn'gu*, 195, 270–71.
- 58 Kang Chujin, “Sōwŏn kwa kŭ sahoejōk kinŭng,” 73.
- 59 Yun Hŭimyon, *Chosŏn sidae ūi sōwŏn kwa yangban*, 422.
- 60 Yi Ch'unhŭi, *Yijo sōwŏn mun'go mongnok*, 24, 38–39.
- 61 *Kuam sōnsaeng munjip*, 2:14a.
- 62 *Kuam sōnsaeng munjip*, 2:14a–15a.
- 63 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 19:11a. T'oegye distributed the manuscript to his disciples for transcription in 1555 (see Chōng Sunmok, *T'oegye chōngjŏn*, 457). Kim Puryun (1531–1598) and Kūm Nansu (1530–1604) also participated in the transcription process (see *Sŏrwŏltang sōnsaeng munjip*, 6:2b; and *Sōngjae sōnsaeng munjip*, yŏnbo, 4a).
- 64 Hwang used movable type rented from Imgo Academy in Yōngch'ŏn for the publication of this anthology in 1561 (see *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 19:7a–8b; and *T'oegye sōnsaeng sokchip*, 4:4b–5b).
- 65 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 19:14a.
- 66 *Kūmgŭe sōnsaeng munjip*, 4:26a.
- 67 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 19:11b–12a.
- 68 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 19:14a.

- 69 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 20:14b–15a.
- 70 Genette, *Paratexts*, 12, 409.
- 71 Hanna, "Annotation as Social Practice," 178.
- 72 *T'oegye sōnsaeng munjip*, 15:4a–b.
- 73 Ki, *Kugyōk Kobong chip*, 1:355.
- 74 Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*, 59.
- 75 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 145–50.
- 76 Messick, "Written Identities," 25–51.
- 77 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:29–31, 413–14.
- 78 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:31–32, 415–16.
- 79 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:71–109, 435–45.
- 80 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:64–66, 431–32.
- 81 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:66–71, 432–34.
- 82 According to the Chosōn laws, individuals' social status was decided by that of both their parents. Therefore, the sons of *yangban* males and their nonelite concubines were categorized as a secondary social group, although they inherited their fathers' last names. These secondary sons (*sōl*) were not allowed to take the civil service examinations (see Hwang, *Beyond Birth*, 208–47).
- 83 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:112–13.
- 84 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:113–14.
- 85 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:114–15.
- 86 *Kojong sillok*, 22:29b–30a.
- 87 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:117–21.
- 88 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 1:121–22.
- 89 Yi Suhwan, "Yōngnam chibang sōwōn ūi kyōngjejōk kiban," 273–309.
- 90 Son Pyōnggyu, "Chosōn hugi Kyōngju Oksan Sōwōn ūi nobi kyōngyōng," 96.
- 91 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 2:70–72, 333–38.
- 92 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 2:177, 416.
- 93 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 2:150, 399–400.
- 94 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 2:138–41, 391–93. These documents were produced in Ŭllyu, Pyōngsul, Muja, and Imjin years, but with no further information, it is impossible to determine when they were actually written.
- 95 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 2:84, 342–43. This petition was presented in the Sinmyo year, but with only this information, we cannot determine exactly when.
- 96 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 2:153–54, 404.
- 97 Jisoo M. Kim, "Women's Legal Voice," 667–86, esp. 674–75.
- 98 *Tosan sōwōn komunsō*, 2:114–17, 364–68.
- 99 Yi Sugōn, *Han'guk ūi sōngssi wa chokpo*, 56.
- 100 Jeurgens, "The Scent of the Digital Archive," 49.
- 101 Gully, *The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society*, 13.
- 102 Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*.
- 103 For the relation between printed blanks and authority, see Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 21–52; and Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 232–51.

- 1 Peter Bol argues that these common practices of Song Chinese scholars in their efforts to pass the civil service examination bound nationwide elites together. The same practices also took place in Chosŏn academy education and integrated nationwide scholars into a community (see Bol, "The Sung Examination System and the Shih," 149–71).
- 2 Tilly, *Contentious Performances*, 60.
- 3 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 20–21.
- 4 Shirky, "How Cellphones, Twitter, Facebook Can Make History," TED Talks, June 2009, Washington, DC, www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_iN_QubRso.
- 5 A similar genre, "she association circulars" (Ch. *shesi zhuan tie*), had been widely used in medieval China for social gatherings for various purposes (see Galambos, "She Association Circulars from Dunhuang," 853–77).
- 6 Hwisang Cho, "Circular Letters in Chosŏn Society," 100–120.
- 7 Yi Sugŏn, "Yŏngnam yuso e taehayŏ," 583–84.
- 8 For an example of this, see *T'ongmun so ch'o* in Keimyung University Tongsan Library (교) 951.091 통문소.
- 9 Kim Sŏkkŭn, "Yugyo kongdongch'e wa chibang chach'i," 112–28, esp. 118–19.
- 10 The effectiveness of circular letters in mobilizing people for group actions also appears in popular literature. For the case of *The Tale of Hŭngbu*, see Kang Myŏnggwān, *Chosŏn sidae munhak yesul ūi saengsong konggan*, 174.
- 11 Yi Sugŏn, "Yŏngnam yuso e taehayŏ."
- 12 Sŏl, *Chosŏn sidae yusaeng sangso wa kongnon chŏngch'i*, 38.
- 13 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 35.
- 14 William Warner, *Protocols of Liberty*, 31–74, esp. 32–33 and 39.
- 15 *Sunjo sillok*, 2:29b–30a. For details about the failed rebellion in 1800, see *Sunjo sillok*, 1:20b and 1:23a–28a.
- 16 I have only found this kind of note slanted at 45 degrees in circular letters. I suspect that the production of such notes might be related to the seating order in the meetings. If the leader of the meeting sat at the center while referring to the document and the record keeper sat at his right side, this record keeper might have had to turn his body to the left and stoop down to record something on the original document, which could have made his notes on it slanted by 45 degrees.
- 17 The *sillok* does not include any information about the submission of joint memorials by this group.
- 18 Ch'a, "Uri nara chobo e taehan sinmunhakchŏk punsŏkko," 65–102.
- 19 For these examples, see Han'guk Koganch'al Yŏn'guhoe, ed., *Yet Munin tŭl ūi Ch'osŏ Kanch'al*, 166–67 and 176–77.
- 20 Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, 164.
- 21 Sood, "Correspondence Is Equal to a Half a Meeting," 208.
- 22 Dierks, *In My Power*, 144.
- 23 Harrison, "Newspapers and Nationalism in Rural China 1890–1929," 190.

- 24 For an example of this, see Kungnip Chungang Pangmulgwan Yöksabu, ed., *Kanch'al (i)*, 16–17.
- 25 William Warner, *Protocols of Liberty*, 46.
- 26 Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic*.
- 27 *Sukchong sillok*, 43:40a–41a.
- 28 *Yŏngjo sillok*, 2:5a–b.
- 29 For such cases during the Imjin War, see *Sŏnjo sillok*, 53:17b–20a. During this war, the court even considered prohibiting the publication of court newsletters for security purposes (see *Sŏnjo sillok*, 89:16a–17a). The Chosŏn court was equally eager to collect useful information from Chinese court gazettes (see *Sŏnjo sillok*, 46:2b–3a).
- 30 Sŏ Myŏngbin (1692–1763), for instance, challenged such an attempt by Yŏngjo in 1729 (see *Yŏngjo sillok*, 22:29a).
- 31 One *sillok* record describes these people as “those who are literate but idling away in the capital” (*kyŏngjung sikcha yusik chi in*). They might be the literati who did not have official positions, but Sŏnjo referred to them as “a group of slaves” (*nobae*) while suspecting that there were some literati instigators behind them. Another *sillok* record refers to the same group as *kiin*, which denoted Koryŏ provincial elites held in the capital as political hostages. The domination of political news by this rather politically ambiguous group might have been alarming enough for the state authority (see *Sŏnjo sillok*, 11:8b and 12:1b; and *Sŏnjo sujŏng sillok*, 12:1a).
- 32 Kim Yŏngju, “*Chobo e taehan myŏt kkaji chaengchŏm*,” 247–82.
- 33 See *Sŏnjo sillok*, 30:9a–b and 94:1a–b.
- 34 *Kyŏngjong sillok*, 13:18b–19a.
- 35 Studies on Western print culture have championed this idea of the “fixity” of contents and textual forms as the core characteristic of printed matter, as initially put forward by Elizabeth Eisenstein. Recently, some scholars have raised questions about this idea, most famously Adrian Johns. Johns claimed that even printed matter in early modern Europe suffered numerous variations that were unavoidable in the work of printers. Meanwhile, David McKitterick showed that the production of printed matter was heavily influenced by the tradition of manuscripts. Here I want to put more emphasis on the fixity of the language used in delivering the political news than on the physical forms of the printed matter (see Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*; Johns, *The Nature of the Book*; and McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830*).
- 36 Chartier, *Inscription and Erasure*, 60.
- 37 Rachel Scarborough King, “The Manuscript Newsletter and the Rise of the Newspaper, 1665–1715,” 411–37.
- 38 Harrison, “Newspapers and Nationalism in Rural China 1890–1929,” 190–92.
- 39 The first printed modern-style newspaper was *Hansŏng sunbo*, which was published every ten days starting on October 31, 1883.
- 40 The political elites, however, monitored the political information appearing in newspapers. The copies of *Hansŏng sunbo* were delivered to the royal court for the review of both the king and the crown prince as well as various government offices.

The elites also attempted to control the political information available to the public; the Office of the Royal Secretariat offered the court gazettes to the Bureau for the Dissemination of Texts (Pangmun'guk), which published this newspaper. These traditional court newsletters functioned as the base sources for modern newspapers (see Yi Kwangrin, "Hansǒng sunbo wa Hansǒng chubo e taehan il koch'al," 1–45, esp. 5).

- 41 Duncan and Haboush, "Memorials to the Throne," 42–55.
- 42 Early Chosǒn kings also capitalized on the commoners' petitions to repress the increasing influence of political elites (see Hwisang Cho, "Feeling Power in Early Chosǒn Korea").
- 43 Sǒl, *Chosǒn sidae yusaeng sangso wa kongnon chǒngch'i*, 403–4.
- 44 Kim and Kim, *Chosǒn sidae ūi ǒllon munhwa*, 65.
- 45 See Hwisang Cho, "The Epistolary Brush," 1073–74.
- 46 Kim Yǒngju, "Chosǒn sidae Sǒnggyun'gwan yusaeng ūi kwǒndang, konggwan yǒn'gu," 262.
- 47 Kim Yǒngju, "Chosǒn sidae Sǒnggyun'gwan yusaeng ūi kwǒndang, konggwan yǒn'gu," 267–68.
- 48 Kim Yǒngju, "Chosǒn sidae Sǒnggyun'gwan yusaeng ūi kwǒndang, konggwan yǒn'gu," 265. See also *Chǒngjo sillok*, 25:51a–b.
- 49 Kim Yǒngju, "Chosǒn sidae Sǒnggyun'gwan yusaeng ūi kwǒndang, konggwan yǒn'gu," 279–81.
- 50 Kim Yǒngju, "Chosǒn sidae Sǒnggyun'gwan yusaeng ūi kwǒndang, konggwan yǒn'gu," 284–85.
- 51 The collection of signatures was usually assigned to each academy, school, or clan organization for the sake of convenience. The booklets containing the signatures were forwarded to the committee and later transcribed on the memorials. Due to this convention, when receiving joint memorials, court ministers were suspicious of the legitimacy of the number of participants.
- 52 Hwisang Cho, "Joint Memorials," 56–57; Sǒl, *Chosǒn sidae yusaeng sangso wa kongnon chǒngch'i*, 34–57.
- 53 Yi Suhwan, *Chosǒn hugi sǒwǒn yǒn'gu*, 42.
- 54 Chǒng Manjo, *Chosǒn sidae sǒwǒn yǒn'gu*, 198–99; Yun Hūimyǒn, "Chosǒn sidae sǒwǒn wǒnim yǒn'gu," 41–68.
- 55 Sǒl, "Sǒnjo, Kwanghaegun tae Nammyǒng hakh'a ūi kongnon hyǒngsǒng kwa munmyo chongsa undong," 1–81.
- 56 Koo, "The Origins of the Public Sphere and Civil Society," 397–98.
- 57 *Injo sillok*, 45:41a.
- 58 Hejtmanek, "Sǒwǒn in Chosǒn Korea, 1543–1741," 278.
- 59 *Hyojong sillok*, 18:54a–55b.
- 60 Yǒngho Ch'oe, "Private Academies and the State in Late Chosǒn Korea," 31.
- 61 *Sukchong sillok*, 55:10b–11a.
- 62 *Yǒngjo sillok*, 53:21a.
- 63 *Kojong sillok*, 8:17b–18a. See also Yi Suhwan, *Chosǒn hugi sǒwǒn yǒn'gu*, 344–84; Hejtmanek, "The Elusive Path to Sagehood," 234.

CHAPTER 6. CONTENTIOUS PERFORMANCES IN
POLITICAL EPISTOLARY PRACTICES

- 1 Charles Tilly presented the repeated displays of collective worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC) as one of three characteristics of the social movements that began to develop in England from the late eighteenth century. The other two include sustained campaigns directed at power holders to advance specific programs and the employment of a distinct repertoire. Although the collective activism in the late Chosŏn period involved only educated male elites, these cases did include all three characteristics. The definition of social movements in non-Western societies before modernity awaits more serious study (Tilly, *Contentious Performances*, 72).
- 2 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 98.
- 3 Söl, *Chosŏn sidae yusaeng sangso wa kongnon chŏngch'i*, 403–4.
- 4 Söl, *Chosŏn sidae yusaeng sangso wa kongnon chŏngch'i*, 89–90.
- 5 For instance, about one thousand Royal Academy scholars presented a joint memorial criticizing the Buddhists' influence on state politics in 1560. Although the number of participating scholars exceeded that of Kim Ugoeng's case, this joint memorial failed to elicit the policy change. Although the number of participants holds significance, it does not generate political impacts unless it is visualized as performative spectacles (see *Myŏngjong sillok*, 26:17a–19a and 26:19b–20a).
- 6 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:9a–b.
- 7 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:13a.
- 8 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:14a–15a.
- 9 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:16a–b, 17b–18a.
- 10 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:18b.
- 11 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:21a–b.
- 12 The *sillok* does not indicate exactly when Pou was executed. However, the annotation on abolishing state examinations for Buddhist monks in 1566 includes an official historian's comment that the governor of Cheju Island executed Pou (see *Myŏngjong sillok*, 32:63a).
- 13 Hwisang Cho, "Joint Memorials," 56–57.
- 14 Tarrow, *The Language of Contention*, 3.
- 15 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:1a–5a.
- 16 Tarrow, *The Language of Contention*, 17.
- 17 The search gives a total of 1,091 results from T'aejo (r. 1391–1398) to Sunjong (r. 1907–1910). Out of these, 643 cases (58.9 percent) fall into the reigns from Sŏngjong to Sŏnjo—Sŏngjong (204), Yŏnsan (35), Chungjong (217), Injong (3), Myŏngjong (70), Sŏnjo (129), Sŏnjo sujŏng (11).
- 18 Tarrow, *The Language of Contention*, 15.
- 19 *Sejo sillok*, 39:35a.
- 20 *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*, 7:10a–15b, esp. 14b.
- 21 Kim Ugoeng's record categorizes about 160 out of these 300 or so participants according to their affiliation with nine different academies, which suggests that

local academies played a crucial role in mobilizing rural scholars for this political initiative (see *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:9b–11a).

- 22 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:9b–11a.
23 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:12a–b.
24 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 98.
25 *Kaeam sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:14a–15a.
26 *Myŏngjong sillok*, 31:68b.
27 Hwisang Cho, “Feeling Power in Early Chosŏn Korea.”
28 Tarrow, *The Language of Contention*, 166.
29 Chŏng Chigu, *Sohaeng illok*, n.p.
30 *Sŏrwŏltang chip*, 3:42a–43a.
31 *T’oegye sŏnsaeng sokchip*, 7:21b–22a.
32 *T’oegye sŏnsaeng sokchip*, 7:21b–22a. See also *T’oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 40:22a–23a.
33 *T’oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 27:33b–34a.
34 This notion did persist. For instance, Kwŏn Sangil (1679–1759) claimed that rural scholars were not to address certain issues related to court politics. While criticizing the petition drive organized by scholars of South Kyŏngsang, he asserts that this is why T’oegye objected to the petition drive against Pou and why Chŏng Kyŏngse urged his townsmen not to join the petition drive against Yi Ich’ŏm (1560–1623) (see *Ch’ŏngdae sŏnsaeng munjip*, 7:8a).
35 *T’oegye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 40:20a–b.
36 Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 25.
37 Kang Hyosŏk, *Chŏn’go taebang*, 4:2b.
38 Yun Hŭimyon, “Chosŏn sidae sŏwŏn chŏngch’aek kwa sŏwŏn sŏllip silt’ae,” 65–98.
39 These honorees include Yi Chehyŏn, Yi Saek (1328–1396), and Kwŏn Kŭn.
40 Chin Sangwŏn, “Chosŏn chunggi tohak ŭi chŏngt’ong kyebo sŏnggnip kwa munmyo chongsa,” 153.
41 Chin Sangwŏn, “Chosŏn chunggi tohak ŭi chŏngt’ong kyebo sŏnggnip kwa munmyo chongsa,” 175–76.
42 The request to enshrine the Four Worthies initially appeared in 1568 (Yi I, *Sŏktam ilgi*, 109–10; *Sŏnjo sujŏng sillok*, 7:2b).
43 The Royal Confucian Shrine was destroyed in 1597, and its reconstruction began in 1601 (see Kang Hyosŏk, *Chŏn’go taebang*, 4:2b).
44 Haboush, “Constructing the Center,” 50.
45 *Sŏnjo sujŏng sillok*, 38:1b–2b.
46 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 172:20b–23a.
47 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 172:20b–23a.
48 *Sŏnjo sillok*, 172:26b–27a.
49 *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 30:1a.
50 *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 33:2a–3a.
51 *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 33:4a.
52 *Kwanghaegun ilgi* (*Chungch’obon*), 12:74a and 75a; 32:9a.
53 *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 39:14b–18b.
54 Yi Sanghyŏn, “Wŏlch’ŏn Cho Mok ŭi Tosan sŏwŏn chonghyang nonŭi,” 69.

- 55 *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 40:2b–3b.
- 56 *Kwanghaegun ilgi*, 42:1a–b.
- 57 *Chosŏngdang sŏnsaeng yŏnbo*, 7a.
- 58 *Hakho sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:1a–13b.
- 59 *Hakho sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:11a.
- 60 *Hakho sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:6a.
- 61 *Hakho sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:12a.
- 62 *Hakho sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:12a–13b.
- 63 *Injo sillok*, 31:25b–26b.
- 64 As to the number of scholars who cosigned this joint memorial, different accounts offer different counts. Whereas Yu's record of conduct says he led about 800 scholars of the Yŏngnam area, Hong Ch'öyun (1607–1663), in his comment on Yu's joint memorial in the royal lecture, mentions that about 1,400 scholars signed it. The *sillok* account of the twenty-second day of the second month of 1650, when Yu's group submitted their joint memorial, mentions 900 scholars, and I use that number here (see *Hyojong sillok*, 3:10a–11b; 5:21a–b).
- 65 *Sökkye sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:23b–27b.
- 66 *Hwalchae sŏnsaeng munjip*, 1:33b–39a.
- 67 *Hwalchae sŏnsaeng munjip purok*, 5b–9b.
- 68 *Hyojong sillok*, 4:1a–3b.
- 69 *Hyojong sillok*, 4:3b.
- 70 *Hyojong sillok*, 5:21a–b.
- 71 *Hyojong sillok*, 4:23b. This punishment is called *puhwang*, and it aimed to defame people by posting their names on a piece of yellow paper in a street parade. Because this punishment symbolically paralyzed the honor of Confucian scholars in public, it was applied only to those who committed a moral felony.
- 72 *Paekchoram sŏnsaeng munjip purok*, 2b.
- 73 *Paekchoram sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:6a–7a.
- 74 *Paekchoram sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:10a–b.
- 75 *Paekchoram sŏnsaeng munjip*, 3:13b–14a.
- 76 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 21.
- 77 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 110–11.
- 78 Chŏng Okcha, *Chosŏn chunghwa sasang yon'gu*, 158.
- 79 Chŏng Okcha, *Chosŏn chunghwa sasang yon'gu*, 208–9 and 297.
- 80 Yi drafted one of the early versions of the joint memorial presented by Yu Chik's group in 1650.
- 81 *Miram sŏnsaeng munjip*, 24:1a.
- 82 For more details on the open letter system, see Sun Joo Kim, “Manifestos during the Hong Kyŏngnae Rebellion of 1812,” 141–51.
- 83 *Karam sŏnsaeng munjip purok*, 4:1a–60b.
- 84 Haboush, “Constructing the Center,” 50–51.
- 85 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:41b–44a.
- 86 Söl, “Hyŏnjong 7-nyŏn Yŏngnam yurim ŭi üiryeso pongip chŏnmal,” 303–4.
- 87 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:3a.

- 88 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:3a–b.
- 89 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:4a–5a.
- 90 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:3b–4a.
- 91 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:4a–5a.
- 92 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:9b–10b.
- 93 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 4:21b.
- 94 Deuchler, “Despoilers of the Way—Insulters of the Sages,” 128.
- 95 *Hyŏnjong sillok*, 12:10a–b.
- 96 Haboush, “Constructing the Center,” 69.
- 97 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:7b.
- 98 The Sŏin ministers kept a close eye on the joint memorials presented by Yŏngnam scholars even before the case of Yu Sech’ŏl’s group. For instance, Song Chun’gil’s letter to Yi Tansang in 1663 remarks that the joint memorials from Yŏngnam scholars had been incessant, which Song suspected was their attempt to seize an opportunity to topple the dominance of the Sŏin faction with false information and erroneous opinions (see *Tongch’undang munjip*, 14:3a–b).
- 99 *Chŏnggwanjae chip*, 8:1b–2a.
- 100 *Chŏnggwanjae chip*, 8:2b.
- 101 *Chŏnggwanjae chip*, 10:7a–b and 11:26a–b.
- 102 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:8a–b.
- 103 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:12b.
- 104 *Hoedang sŏnsaeng munjip*, 2:12b.
- 105 Farge, *Subversive Words*, 199.
- 106 Haboush, “Constructing the Center,” 60.
- 107 *Hyŏnjong sillok*, 22:32a–b.
- 108 Han’guk Kukhak Chinhŭngwŏn Yugyo Munhwa Pangmulgwan, ed., *Man saram ŭi ttŭt ŭn ch’ŏnha ŭi ttŭt*, 33.
- 109 Sŏl, “Chosŏn sidae Yŏngnam kongnon hyŏngsŏng kwa Ryu Tosu ŭi maninso,” 124–25.
- 110 Sado was Chŏngjo’s father, and his bizarre behavior caused by his mental disorder had arisen as a political problem undermining the royal authority. When Sado’s father-in-law, Hong Ponghan, and his faction lost political power in officialdom, the competing Noron faction tried to depose the crown prince by disclosing ten of his misdemeanors in 1762. Yŏngjo had to make a political decision to strengthen the kingship in the midst of tumultuous factional strife and ended up ordering the crown prince to be shut up in a rice chest to starve to death. Chŏngjo’s political authority had been unstable even before the beginning of his reign because his predecessor committed filicide and the victim of this crime was his biological father. Because the Noron faction still dominated state politics, the death of the king’s father remained taboo (see Haboush, trans., *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyŏng*; Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea*, 166–233).
- 111 Ryu Ijwa, *Ch’ŏnhwirok*, n.p.
- 112 Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, 149.
- 113 *Chŏngjo sillok*, 34:58a–35:11b.

- 114 *Chǒngjo sillok*, 35:8b–10b.
- 115 Shin, ed., *Korean History in Maps*, 99. Don Baker, however, claims that the official census figures are underestimated due to the attempts to evade taxes and corvée labor. He estimates that the population by the end of the eighteenth century could have been sixteen million or more (see Baker, introduction to *Sources of Korean Tradition*, ed. Ch'oe et al., vol. 2: *From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, 6).
- 116 *Chǒngjo sillok*, 35:10a.
- 117 *Ch'ŏlchong sillok*, 7:6b.
- 118 Excerpts shown in the *History Special* (Yŏksa sŭp'esŏl) program of KBS on September 11, 2010.
- 119 Chǒng Chigu, *Sohaeng illok*, n.p.
- 120 Chǒng Chigu, *Sohaeng illok*.

EPILOGUE: LEGACIES OF THE CHOSŎN EPISTOLARY PRACTICES

- 1 Chǒng Okcha, *Chosŏn hugi chungin munhwa yŏn'gu*, 38–44.
- 2 *Yŏngjo sillok*, 119:41b.
- 3 *Sunjo sillok*, 26:27b–31a.
- 4 This pattern of collective signing around the circumference is commonly observed in Japanese “umbrella letters” (J. *karakasa renbanjō*), which were used frequently to organize popular uprisings (J. *ikki*) during the Tokugawa period. No evidence, however, shows mutual influences between Korean *sabal t'ongmun* and Japanese umbrella letters.
- 5 *Hwangŏng sinmun*, September 8, 1898, 1.
- 6 *Tongnip sinmun*, September 9, 1898, 3.
- 7 *Tongnip sinmun*, September 13, 1898, 1–2.
- 8 *Tongnip sinmun*, September 28, 1898, 4.
- 9 Schmid, *Korea between Empires, 1895–1919*, 107.
- 10 Se-Mi Oh, “Letters to the Editor,” 157–67.
- 11 Zhou, *Historicizing Online Politics*, 68.
- 12 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.
- 13 *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun*, July 9, 1886, 4–5, microfilm reel 60. The *Tokyo Daily* reprinted Kim's memorial appearing in the *Chōya shinbun* one day earlier, on July 8, 1886 (see *Chōya shinbun*, July 8, 1886, 2–3, in *Chōya shinbun shukusatsuban*, vol. 24; for an English translation, see Ch'oe et al., eds., *Sources of Korean Tradition*, 2:256–58).
- 14 Yi Kwangrin, “Hansŏng sunbo wa Hansŏng chubo e taehan il koch'al,” 31.
- 15 Chǒng Okcha, *Chosŏn hugi chungin munhwa yŏn'gu*, 137–38.
- 16 *Kojong sillok*, 23:34b and 35b.
- 17 *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun*, July 15, 1886, 4. This letter had also appeared in the *Chōya shinbun* two days earlier, on July 13, 1886 (see *Chōya shinbun*, July 13, 1886, 2).
- 18 Hull, “Documents and Bureaucracy,” 251–67, esp. 261.
- 19 Kim Ugyun, *Ch'ŏktok wanp'yŏn*, n.p.

- 20 Korean books began to be bound in Western styles only in the 1940s. Korean books in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked the site of compromise and negotiation between premodern East Asian textual norms and Western print culture (see Ryu Hyŏn'guk, *Han'gŭl hwalcha ŭi t'ansaeng, 1820–1945*, 319).
- 21 Yi Kwangsu, *Ch'unwŏn sŏgan munbŏm*.
- 22 *Koryŏsa*, 109:20b–21b, accessed August 15, 2017, http://db.history.go.kr/KOREA/item/level.do?itemId=kr&bookId=%E5%88%97%E5%82%B3&types=o#detail/kr_109_0010_0100.
- 23 *Sŏnjo sujŏng sillok*, 23:1a–8a; *Kojong sillok*, 13:10b–11a.
- 24 These cases include the protest against the abolition of the household registry law in 2004, that against the government education reform plan in 2009, the rally for maintaining the *Han'gŭl* day as a national holiday in 2012, and that calling for the expansion of the national pension system for the indigent elderly in 2014.
- 25 “Andong maninso 25-il Ch'ŏngwadae esŏ pongson ŭirye,” *Andong int'ŏnet nyusŭ*, October 22, 2010, <http://adinews.co.kr/ArticleView.asp?intNum=14264&ASection=001001>.
- 26 “Yŏngnam ch'oedae kyumo, Yŏngnam *maninso* chaehyŏn haengsa Andong esŏ yŏllyŏ,” *Andong nyusŭ*, September 3, 2010, www.andong.net/entertainment1/board3.asp?seq=10427&page=2.
- 27 “Kyŏngju simin maninso, 9-wŏl 7-il Ch'ŏngwadae kanda!” *T'arhaek sinmun*, October 16, 2015, <http://nonukesnews.kr/590>.
- 28 “Kyŏngju simin maninso, 9-wŏl 7-il Ch'ŏngwadae kanda!”
- 29 Although skepticism exists about the sweeping political effects of the Internet in understanding the result of the 2002 presidential election, Roh's landslide victory with voters in their twenties and thirties strongly suggests the effects of the Internet shaping real politics (see Seongyi Yun, “The Internet and the 2002 Presidential Election in South Korea,” 209–29).
- 30 Seongyi Yun, “The Internet and the 2002 Presidential Election in South Korea,” 227.

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